National Grid

Landscape Enhancement Initiative Evaluation

Mid Term Evaluation

Final Report

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Chapter 1
Executive Summary

1.1 The Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) was established in 2015 and is a vital part of National Grid's Visual Impact provision (VIP). National Landscapes and National Parks that have transmissions lines running through them or adjacent to boundaries are eligible for the scheme. There are 30 eligible areas, with 20 organisations that have received funding so far (**Figure 1.1**).

1.2 The purpose of a LEI project is to:

- To reduce the visual impact on people living in or visiting the designated area; and
- To enhance the landscape in the designated area.

1.3 The LEI scheme has achieved a 10-year milestone this year which provides a good opportunity to deliver a mid-programme evaluation to collate, record and present the evidence of the scheme's impact so far. **Table 1.1** summarises high level data for all grants awarded to date (November 2025).

1.4 This report presents the impact evaluation completed to collate and provide evidence of environmental, social and economic impacts of the LEI scheme. Evaluation questions were co-designed with the LEI team and outlined the parameters of the evaluation.

1.5 Evidence was collected via three methods:

- An online survey form sent to and completed by 19 out of the 20 funded organisations;
- 20 project interviews; and
- 11 stakeholder interviews, including panel members and key partner organisations.

Key findings:

Landscape and Visual Criteria

1.6 95% of funded organisations believed that reducing the visibility of existing infrastructure was delivered by focusing views elsewhere or enhancing the surrounding habitats. A number of projects also directly screened pylons through hedgerow and tree planting.

1.7 78% of funded organisations stated that the landscape character and distinctiveness had been strengthened (39%) or highly strengthened (39%) as a result of LEI projects.

1.8 83% of organisations stated in the online form that projects would not have happened without LEI funding.

> *"Landscape character would have deteriorated without management being funding by LEI and we wouldn't have been able to do this at scale."*

1.9 All projects were aligned with the relevant Protected Landscape management plan, often relating to enhanced access and nature recovery and habitat/historic management. An additional impact outside the scope of the programme, included LEI projects also contributing to partner organisation and national goals.

1.10 Panel members and stakeholder interviews were found to agree with the above statements and provided additional supporting evidence.

Other Environmental Criteria:

1.11 LEI projects had an impact on increasing the condition and quantity of semi-natural habitats. Historic feature projects, often related to boundary features (dry stone walls) or above-ground feature restoration. Key headline outputs are summarised in an infographic produced with internal monitoring data by the LEI team and Camargue (**Figure 1.2**).

Social and Economic Criteria:

1.12 Public access and enjoyment of areas are often mentioned as being improved through delivery of the LEI projects. Over 61% of funded organisations in the survey form felt that access to the landscape had increased as a result of LEI projects and 67% felt the quality of access had improved. A visual increase in number of visitors was identified but increased diversity of visitors was not often cited as an impact.

1.13 A significant impact of the LEI programme has been the developed partnerships between the Protected Landscapes and eNGOs, landowners, local communities, local groups and local contractors.

> *"A landowner's perspective of delivering enhancement/maintenance works has now changed, with a new found interest in the landscape."*

1.14 Local suppliers were often used throughout the lifecycle of projects, which provided a positive economic impact.

1.15 The LEI programme was found to positively impact resource capacity by providing funding for project officer roles. However, it was noted by multiple project officers in interviews that input from existing staff and partners, and time for project management and resourcing was often exceeded. This was attributed to unintended impacts leading to programme delay and under forecasting of time needed for project delivery.

Evaluation Recommendations

1.16 The following evaluation recommendations were designed to encourage the communication of the positive impacts that the LEI programme is delivering but also to highlight where improvements can be made for the future of the scheme.

- Develop **formal case studies** for different types of projects e.g. habitat creation/restoration, historic feature restoration and access improvements.
- Explore **potential funding** for National Landscape and National Parks **to promote the LEI scheme** and encourage engagement from a wider variety of landowners.
- Consider developing a **facilitation/project development fund** to support landowners to collaborate and design applications.
- **Consider the legacy of projects** during the project development phase, which may involve a **legacy criteria question** which focuses on securing long-term management past the project's lifespan.
- Consider a **process evaluation** which aims to understand the user experience of the scheme and how this impacts the effectiveness of the programme.
- Consider **expanding the eligibility area** for the LEI scheme outside of designated areas.

Conclusion

1.17 It is clear that the LEI scheme is perceived to be a unique mechanism to fund landscape management and restoration. Without the scheme landscape character would have likely deteriorated, with important natural and historic features damaged and/or lost.

1.18 The LEI programme is also a key delivery tool for achieving local and national policies and plans. The programme is viewed as a vital fund for project partners to deliver objectives and goals aimed at nature recovery, climate resilience, heritage conservation and improving access to nature.

1.19 Positive impacts were also recorded for increasing access, to and enjoyment of affected areas. The LEI programme has been reported to have a significant positive impact on developing working partnerships between National Landscape and National Park teams and external partners such as eNGOs, private landowners, local authorities and community groups. Developed partnerships have resulted in

new opportunities across the landscapes, resulting in further landscape enhancements and projects outside of LEI.

1.20 The legacy impact of the LEI programme to date, at this 10-year milestone, includes significant protection and enhancement of landscape features and a greater ability for people to access and enjoy. The LEI programme has developed new partnerships which will continue to deliver positive impacts through future LEI projects but also provide an opportunity to have an impact beyond the scheme.

Legacy impacts

"Increased biodiversity, better access, taking pressure off the National Landscape, and enhancing the cultural heritage that would have otherwise been lost."

"It has got everyone round the table and facilitate a discussion on what we can do for the landscape…this conversation can continue and if in the future there is another pot of money, we have a working group that would be willing to work together after a positive experience through this LEI project."

"It has improved our organisational reputation and allowed people to be employed. It has allowed some stability in the area."

"It has raised awareness of the National Landscape in the area, re-establishing a presence that had been lost for years."

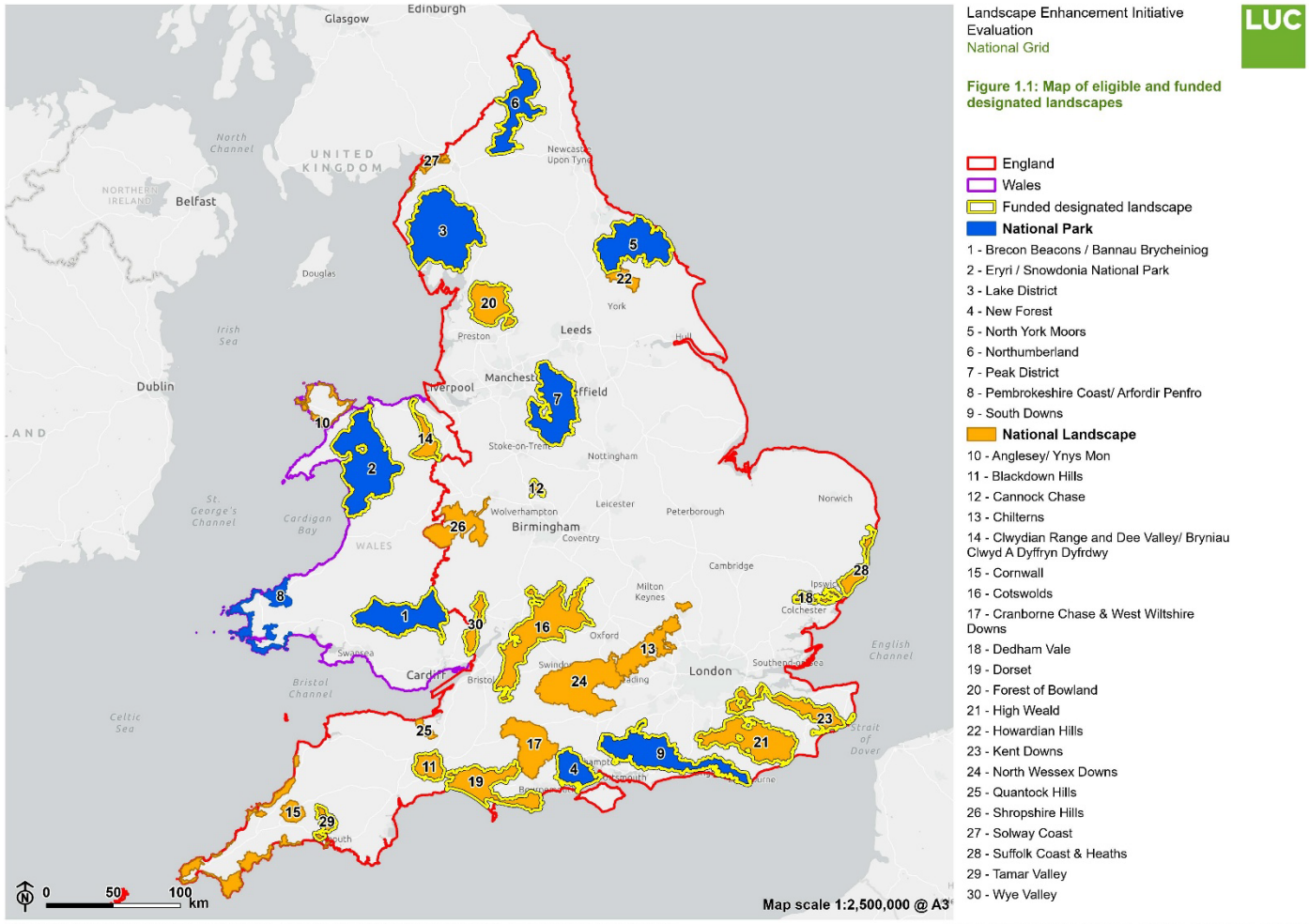
"This supports the long-term visual and cultural identity of the landscape, closely tied to its designation and artistic heritage. Also has secondary biodiversity benefits on habitats and boundary restoration which tie into other projects."

1.21 Therefore, it can be summarised that the LEI programme to date has delivered an array of positive landscape and visual impacts, alongside other social, economic and environmental impacts.

Table 1.1 High-level data for all grants awarded up to November 2025

Funds dispersed	
Under Rio 1	£6,087,600
Under Rio 2	£6,638,916
Total value	**£12,726,516**
Total number of grants	69
Total match funding	£5,989,368.07

Figure 1.1 Map of eligible organisations and those that have received funding.



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community. 13495_LEI_Report_Additional_Figures_2025/ 01/12/2025

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Figure 1.2 Infographic produced by Carmargue to present LEI project outputs up until June 2025

Chapter 2
Introduction

Context

2.1 National Grid own, maintain and develop the high voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales. The Visual Impact Provision (VIP) is a National Grid project that aims to reduce the impact of existing transmission lines within English and Welsh National Landscape and National Parks.

2.2 The VIP project aims to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of landscapes. The Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) is a vital part of the VIP project, which aims to deliver smaller visual improvement projects.

2.3 The LEI scheme was established in 2015 and has since funded 67 projects up to June 2025. National Landscapes and National Parks that have transmissions lines running through them or adjacent to boundaries are eligible for the scheme, there are 30 eligible areas (**Figure 1.1**, pg 4). Applications must be submitted by National Landscape Partnerships or National Park Authorities. All applications are then assessed by a Grants Officer and Landscape Advisor before final approval by the LEI Approvals Panel.

2.4 The purpose of a LEI project is to:

- To reduce the visual impact on people living in or visiting the designated area; and
- To enhance the landscape in the designated area.

2.5 Within the first 10 years of the scheme, a total of value of £12,726,516 has been awarded, across 69 grants. A list of the 20 grant recipients is presented in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1 LEI Grant recipients

National Landscape	National Park
Blackdown Hills	Brecon Beacons
Cannock Chase	Eryri
Clwydian Range and Dee Valley	Lake District
Cotswolds	New Forest
Dedham Vale	North York Moors

National Landscape	National Park
Dorset	Northumberland
Forest of Bowland	Peak District
High Weald	South Downs
Kent Downs	
Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths	
Tamar Valley	
Wye Valley	

2.6 Over the next five years, the LEI scheme aims to build on its previous success and deliver funds in the region of £12 million to continue enhancement works within National Landscapes and National Parks in England and Wales.

Mid-Term Evaluation

2.7 The LEI scheme has achieved a 10-year milestone this year which provides a good opportunity to deliver a mid-programme evaluation to collate, record and present the evidence of the scheme's impact so far.

2.8 The purpose of this mid-term evaluation is to deliver an impact evaluation. The Magenta Book defines the aim of an impact evaluation as 'to assess what changes have occurred and the scale of those changes'[1].

2.9 The impact evaluation will provide an opportunity to collate and provide evidence of environmental, social, and economic impacts and present the findings to National Grid's wider audience.

2.10 Evaluation questions will be designed to set the parameters of the evaluation. Data collection methods will include:

- An online survey form;
- Project interviews; and
- Stakeholder interviews.

2.11 This report summarises the methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the impact evaluation.

2.12 A summary of each chapter can be found below:

- **Chapter 3:** Methodology: *A summary of the evaluation approach.*
- **Chapter 4:** Results: *findings from the online survey and interviews in relation to the evaluation questions.*
- **Chapter 5:** Key findings & Conclusion: *A summary of the report and evaluation recommendations.*
- **Appendix A:** *Online Survey Forms*
- **Appendix B:** *Project Interview Script*
- **Appendix C:** *Stakeholder Interview Script*

[1] HM Treasury (2011) The Magenta Book, pg 32. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book

Chapter 3
Methodology

Evaluation Questions

3.1 An evaluation is framed by the list of evaluation questions to be answered. Evaluation questions for this impact evaluation were co-designed with the LEI team.

3.2 The evaluation questions for this mid-term evaluation were constructed based on the LEI scheme primary, environmental, social, and economic selection criteria used to assess suitable projects. All approved projects should meet all primary criteria and relevant other criteria, so this provides a clear baseline as to what impacts LEI projects are expected to deliver.

3.3 The finalised evaluation questions are summarised below in **Table 3.1.**

Table 3.1: Evaluation questions relating to landscape and visual criteria (the primary criteria)	
1. How has the programme changed the visual impact of existing electricity transmission infrastructure from publicly accessible viewpoints, and the general visual resource experienced by local communities and/or by visitors to the area?	1.1 To what extent has the visibility of existing infrastructure changed? - If visibility has not yet been reduced, is it anticipated that visibility will be reduced over the next 10 years?
	1.2 What interventions have caused a change in visibility?
2. To what extent has the programme enhanced the landscape in the affected area?	2.1 What landscape features have been changed through projects?
	2.2 What landscape features have been added through projects?
	2.3 Where projects are located, has the condition of existing landscape features improved?
3. Has the character of landscapes changed as a result of the programme?	3.1 To what extent have projects strengthened landscape character and distinctiveness?
	3.2 What would have happened to the character of landscapes had the projects not been implemented?
	3.3 Has the level of tranquillity increased?
4. Has the programme impacted objectives set out in local and national policies and plans?	4.1 Have projects contributed to the achievement of objectives and targets set out in National Landscape or National Park management plans?
	4.2 Have projects contributed to the government targets and goals to protect the natural environment in the Environmental Improvement Plan? In particular, Goal 1, thriving plants and wildlife, Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change and Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement?

Evaluation Questions relating to other environmental criteria	
5. Has the programme brought any other environmental benefits to the eligible areas for example, protecting or enhancing biodiversity and/or protecting or enhancing historic features?	5.1 Has the area covered by semi-natural habitats increased since the inception of the programme? If so, which semi-natural habitats have increased, and by how much (Ha)?
	5.2 Has the condition of historic and heritage features improved since the inception of the programme? If so, what specific features?
	5.3 Have projects had a positive impact on wildlife? - If so, which, if any, protected species have benefited, and what has the impact been? - Have there been any other recorded positive impacts on other species or taxa?
	5.4 Have projects improved the climate resilience of landscapes? - Have existing habitats been extended or linked to increase the patch size, or reduce fragmentation? If so by how much (Ha) - Has the quality of habitats improved due to better management practices? (No of management plans) - Have new wildlife corridors been created to enhance habitat connectivity? (m of linking margins/hedges etc.) - Have woodlands or other features that will capture carbon been planted? If so, how much? (Ha/m)
6. Has the project adversely affected environmental features, such as wildlife sites and historic features?	6.1 Have there been any unintended impacts on wildlife sites or historic features within project areas or adjacent areas?
	6.2 Have projects given rise to other inadvertent adverse environmental impacts, including pollution: - During implementation? - or after implementation?

Evaluation Questions relating to the social and economic criteria	
7. Has the programme contributed to improved public access to, and enjoyment of, the landscape?	7.1 Has public access to the landscape increased? 7.2 Has the quality of access routes improved? 7.3 Has there been better interpretation? 7.4 Have projects enhanced the number and diversity of visitors to the landscapes?
8. How has the programme promoted a partnership approach and/or community involvement?	8.1 Have communities or partnerships been involved in the development, design or implementation of the projects? - If so, how?
	8.2 Has implementation of projects impacted local partnerships or communities? If so how?
9. How have projects impacted sustainable and economic development in the area?	9.1 Have the projects used local suppliers of products, services and/ or materials? If so, which were sourced locally?
10. Have projects provided educational opportunities?	10.1 Have projects contributed to education? - Have projects provided training? If so, in what? - What impact have projects had on the local skills base? - Have projects contributed to a greater understanding of the landscape for local communities and visitors? If so, how?

Data collection

3.4 Evidence to answer the evaluation questions were collected via three methods: an online survey form sent to all funded organisations, project interviews and stakeholder interviews.

Online survey form

3.5 To understand the impacts of LEI projects, a Microsoft form was designed to document eligible funded organisations (National Landscapes and National Parks) understanding of the impacts delivered by projects. The online survey form was sent to all 20 organisations that have received funding since the inception of the LEI programme. The form was completed by 19/20 of the organisations.

3.6 An information sheet and privacy notice was issued with the online survey form for ethical considerations. The two documents provided an overview of the project, how the data would be processed and stored, contact details if any questions and the voluntary nature of the form with the ability to rescind data within 30 days of completion.

3.7 For some organisations, the respondent individual may be/have been responsible for project management of more than one project. In this case, the respondent was asked to answer questions for all projects. At the beginning of the form, instructions were provided.

3.8 The form consisted of 28 questions, both open and closed, aiming to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The full survey form can be founded in **Appendix A**. The form was divided into three different sections to focus on the following:

- Landscape and visual criteria;
- Other environmental criteria; and
- Social and economic criteria.

3.9 The survey questions were coded against the relevant evaluation question, so that the responses could be easily linked to the relevant evaluation question that they aimed to answer.

3.10 Questions were branched to allow respondents to only answer questions that were relevant to their projects. The average time taken to complete the form was 29 minutes.

Project Interviews

3.11 Following the online survey form, 20 project online interviews were held with the National Landscapes or National Parks project officers. In some cases, project officers invited representatives of project partners. For the sake of this evaluation, all interviewees will be collectively referred to as 'project officers'. The aim of the interview was to collect more nuanced responses and to explore the impacts of LEI projects in more depth.

3.12 A sampling methodology for the interviews followed a quota approach. The sampling metrics chosen are summarised in **Table 3.2**. These metrics were chosen to ensure that the 20 interviews represented the sample pool (67 projects) and that all evaluation questions could be answered.

Table 3.2 Project interview sampling metrics

Metric	Number of projects	% total of sample (n=67)	Target number of projects for interviews (n=20)	Completed number of project interviews (n=20)
Metric 1: Status of project				
Completed	26	39%	x8	**6**
Live	41	61%	x12	**14**
Metric 2: Designated Landscape				
National Park	32	48%	x10	**10**
National Landscape	35	52%	x10	**10**
Metric 3: Grant amount				
£0 - £ 50,000	6	9%	x2	**2**
£50,001 - £100,000	6	9%	x2	**1**
£100,001 - £200,000	34	51%	x10	**11**
£200,001+	21	31%	x6	**6**
Metric 4: Core project type				
Accessibility, amenities and engagement	15	23%	x5	**6**
Boundary features	20	30%	x6	**5**
Habitats	20	30%	x6	**6**
Historic features	10	17%	x3	**3**

3.13 It was decided that all funded organisations should be included in the sample pool, despite there being a variation in the total number of projects. Including every funded organisation within the sample helped to ensure coverage of a variety of landscape features, geography and project size.

3.14 After an initial sample, the geographic variation was reviewed to ensure an even geographical spread of designated landscapes were chosen. For three projects, no contact was made or a refusal to participate was experienced. A replacement project which met similar metrics was attempted. However, this resulted in the following quotas being exceeded:

- Two more live projects interviewed.
- One more project with a grant amount between £100,001 - £200,000 and one less for £50,001 - £100,000.
- One more accessibility, amenities and engagement project interviewed, one less boundary feature interview.

3.15 As the quotas were not exceeded significantly, the selected projects were seen to still be a representative sample.

3.16 The interview script followed a similar layout to the online survey form, being grouped into the following sections:

- Landscape and visual criteria;
- Other environmental criteria;
- Social and economic criteria; and
- Legacy impact.

3.17 The script contained 30 questions and interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. Questions were designed to encourage honest and meaningful feedback avoiding leading or closed questions. The full interview script can be found in **Appendix B**.

Stakeholder Interviews

3.18 A list of twelve LEI stakeholders was drafted and agreed with the LEI team. The list of stakeholders aimed to include panel members and representatives from key partner organisations. The aim of the interview was to address any evidence gaps or further questions identified through the survey form and project interviews.

3.19 The interview script contained 11 questions and focused on strategic impacts such as contribution to local/national policies and plans, organisation capacity, internal educational opportunities and partnerships. The full script can be found in **Appendix C**. Interviews lasted between 15 to 30 minutes.

3.20 Eleven out of the twelve interviews were conducted, as no responses were received for a number of invites. Due to the timing of the evaluation programme, one interview could not be scheduled.

Data analysis

3.21 The online survey form was completed by 19/20 funded organisations and the data abstracted into an Excel database. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed against the relevant evaluation questions. The database was filtered to summarise the information for each question topic, where key findings could be identified. For the analysis of each survey form question n=19.

3.22 For both project and stakeholder interviews answers were transcribed and abstracted into an Excel database. Similarly to the online survey form, by using the filter function key findings for each question could be identified as well as patterns and unintended impacts. The analysis of the interview data was compared and analysed alongside the online survey form evidence. Collectively, the findings were cross-referenced against the evaluation questions to present conclusions and key evaluation recommendations.

Chapter 4
Results

4.1 This chapter presents the results of the online survey form and project and stakeholder interviews. The results have also been supplemented by internal monitoring data provided by the LEI team. The findings have been grouped under the evaluation questions they have answered.

Landscape and Visual Criteria

To what extent has the programme enhanced the landscape in the affected area?

4.2 Funded organisations believed that LEI projects have had a significant positive impact on the condition of existing landscape features. When asked through the online survey to assess how the overall condition of landscape features has changed, 50% saw a significant improvement, 28% an improvement, 6% no change and only 6% believed there had been a decline in condition.

4.3 Project interviews identified that enhancements to the landscape were through improved condition and quantity of semi-natural habitats, restoration of historic and boundary features and access improvements. These impacts are explored in more detail later in this chapter.

> *"Only positive changes, these hangers are absolutely intrinsic to the landscape character of that part of the Park, so maintaining and improving the quality of these features are going to have a positive impact on the landscape."*

4.4 One respondent believed that there had been no change or a decline in condition of landscape features. This was attributed to a project that focused on a historic monument in isolation rather than at the landscape scale.

4.5 An unintended impact identified through the interviews was the experience gained from existing/completed projects. For example, positive experiences through the delivery of an initial LEI project were identified as building the confidence to explore more ambitious outcomes. Therefore, LEI projects have not just impacted existing landscape features, but it is implied that the scheme moving forward will deliver more ambitious outcomes and have a greater impact.

"*This project has enabled future LEI projects; the positive experience and scale of the project have built the Council's confidence to deliver more. This project has been the catalyst, we've learned a lot from doing it which has helped with developing new LEI projects*."

4.6 During the stakeholder interviews, it was clear that panels members agreed with the findings collated from funded organisations. Panel members agreed that the LEI scheme had delivered landscape-level impact, restoring and enhancing important landscape features.

"*Landscape scale impact including tree planting, hedgerows, stone walling and other key traditional features of the landscape - these are really valuable. Strengthens landscape so it can accommodate the overhead lines*" – Panel member

4.7 Overall, LEI project officers and stakeholders felt that LEI projects have had a significant impact on enhancing the landscape in affected areas, through improved feature management, restoration and creation.

How has the programme changed the visual impact of existing electricity transmission infrastructure from publicly accessible viewpoints, and the general visual resource experienced by local communities and/or by visitors to the area?

4.8 Most funded organisations explained that directly reducing the visibility of the infrastructure was not a realistic objective as the size of the pylons would make it extremely difficult to screen. Instead, organisations believed that projects could significantly reduce the visibility by diverting the focus away. Examples of how projects diverted the focus away included:

- Improving condition and quantity of semi-natural habitats surrounding the pylons.
- Installation of paths to new viewpoints away from pylons.

"*Reducing visibility directly hasn't been a main aim of the project, instead it has been improving the habitats within the area to move sightlines away from the infrastructure. Within this area it wouldn't be possible to reduce the visibility due to the nature of the landscape."*

"*Creating views in certain places and turning views away from overhead lines… you could see for miles and this change in perspective reduced the impact of the overhead lines. Even small changes can make a difference*." – Panel member

4.9 Tree and hedgerow planting were identified as interventions with the potential to reduce the visibility of existing infrastructure. 47% of funded organisations had stated that woodland creation would reduce visibility within their landscapes and 47% through tree planting.

4.10 Funded organisations noted that reducing the visibility of existing infrastructure is time sensitive, with 28% of organisations agreeing it would take 10+ years for interventions to have a significant impact and a further 28% saying 5-10 years.

Figure 4.1 Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape: *Lost Landscapes Rediscovered* - Planted hedgerow with fencing.

4.11 This evaluation therefore found that LEI projects changed the visual impact of electricity transmission infrastructure through improving access to viewpoints away from pylons, which is explored further in paragraph **4.38**. As well as, diverting the attention by improving the condition of surrounding natural habitats.

4.12 Directly reducing the impact of infrastructure was also reported, but organisations understood that this will take time to deliver as trees will need to mature.

Has the character of landscapes changed as a result of the programme?

4.13 There was clear evidence to suggest that projects were having a positive influence on the landscape character as a result of the programme. 78% of funded organisations stated that the landscape character and distinctiveness had been strengthened (39%) or highly strengthened (39%) as a result of LEI projects. The remaining 22% found there was a neutral change. During interviews, project officers attributed the positive change to:

- Restoring natural landscape features such as removal of conifer plantations to native broadleaf woodland, and removal of scrub to open grassland and moorland.
- Restoring distinctive boundary features such as hedgerows and drystone walls.
- Provision of new features such as hedgerows, tree planting and meadow/grassland creation.
- Restoring historic monuments through scrub removal and structural repairs.

4.14 During the project interviews, officers reported that habitats and landscape features would have continued to decline, and the value of the landscape may have been lost if projects had not been implemented. They identified that landscape character projects may have been completed without LEI funding, but it was evident that not at the scale achievable through the LEI programme and within a short period of time. This view was also reflected in the online survey; 83% of funded organisations stated in the online form that projects would not have happened without LEI funding.

"We wouldn't have been able to progress any of it, the historic feature would have likely deteriorated further without this project. I don't think we'd be looking at the monument as it is today without the funding that we've received."

"LEI is very popular. Most of this work would not happen without this programme."

4.15 Therefore, the LEI programme has had a significant impact on restoring and maintaining the landscape character and distinctiveness in affected areas, by preventing further deterioration and enabling large-scale interventions.

4.16 In terms of tranquillity, LEI projects were perceived to have a positive impact. 56% of officers stated in the online form that project implementation had resulted in a positive change to the tranquillity of the landscape. 44% stated that they perceived no change to tranquillity, with interviewees often stating that tranquillity was subjective, so it was hard to judge. Therefore, there is slightly less evidence that LEI projects have had a significant impact on tranquillity in affected areas. No formal monitoring of noise or visitor pressure were completed.

Has the programme impacted objectives set out in local and national policies and plans?

4.17 All project officers interviewed agreed that LEI projects had a positive impact on delivering objectives and goals set out in their National Park or National Landscape management plan. For example:

- Restoration of native broadleaf from conifer plantation contributes to a goal of bringing 3,000 ha of land into restoration.
- Restoration and conservation of a historic feature to meet an objective of removing features off the Heritage at Risk Register.
- Access improvements to contribute to a welcoming and accessible landscape objective.

"All elements of the project directly correspond to the management plan. We have nine special qualities in the Park and the project ties in with all of them."

4.18 During stakeholder interviews, it was clear that LEI projects had also helped achieve external partner organisational goals. For example, Cadw highlighted that the programme has helped contribute to their remit to monitor historic features and reduce the number of monuments at risk. A representative from both the National Trust and Wildlife Trust also found the LEI scheme as an important funding mechanism to deliver internal goals.

"We couldn't be where we are without the LEI funding. That is a massive thing. We started the project, had the plan, but didn't know how to fund it."

"LEI has some good projects which help support the governments objectives" – Panel member

"Part of our remit is to monitor monuments at risk and reduce this number and LEI has helped with that" – Panel member

4.19 During interviews, it was also noted that LEI projects provide an opportunity to create a case study on how the Protected Landscape is contributing to its objectives and goals. This was seen to be an unintended impact of the programme. One project officer described how producing a case study on the delivery of a LEI project in their protected landscape had acted twofold: to showcase and promote the LEI programme and; to show what can be achieved when working in partnership with the Protected Landscape.

"This project can act like a case study to show that a cluster of engaged landowners can get together and manage priority habitat and receive the support to do this. It also shows that if you want to do something, the National Park can help you get the money (LEI) and deliver something on the ground within a short period. This is a great success story for us to tell other parts of the Park."

4.20 In addition, the LEI scheme was found to exceed the aim of contributing to local objectives and also contribute to key national goals set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). Evidence was collected on how LEI projects were delivering against the following goals:

- 89% of funded organisations perceived their project(s) to have contributed to **Goal 1: *Thriving Plants and Wildlife***;
- 78% of funded organisations perceived their project(s) to have contributed to **Goal 7: *Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change***; and
- 94% of funded organisations perceived their project(s) to have contributed to **Goal 10: *Enhancing Beauty, Heritage and Engagement*.**

4.21 During the project interviews, the following evidence was collected on how projects contributed to the delivery of EIP goals:

- ***Thriving Plants and Wildlife*:** improving condition and quantity of semi-natural habitats (including designated sites), and implementation of better management practices for sites.
- ***Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change:*** carbon storage and sequestration through tree and hedgerow planting and grassland creation, reduced fragmentation of habitats through better connectivity.
- ***Enhancing Beauty, Heritage and Engagement:*** restoration of historic buildings, boundaries and scheduled monuments. Improved access and interpretation.

4.22 Therefore, it was clearly documented in the evidence collected that LEI projects have not only met the scheme's aim to contribute to local policies and plans but also to wider national goals.

"Adding it all up, nationally it contributes." – Panel member

Other Environmental Criteria:

Has the programme brought any other environmental benefits to the eligible areas for example, protecting or enhancing biodiversity and/or protecting or enhancing historic features?

Semi-natural habitats and wildlife

4.23 LEI projects were perceived by funded organisations through the online form as having increased the quality and/or quantity of a wide variety of semi-natural habitats (**Figure 4.6**). Deciduous woodland was the most common habitat perceived by organisations to have increased in coverage as a result of the LEI programme (where 68% of all organisations noticed a positive change). Internal monitoring data provided by the LEI team included the following headline habitat outputs up to June 2025:

- 76.29km of hedgerow restoration, 22.62km of new hedgerows.
- 201 hectares of existing woodland under management, 18.97 hectares of new woodland created.
- 50,302 trees planted, 189 veteran trees managed.
- 971.3 hectares of grassland/heathland restored.
- 36 new leaky dams.
- 5065 hectares of invasive/scrub species controlled.

4.24 Panel member interviews also identified the importance of LEI projects in conserving and enhancing semi-natural habitats.

"*These projects had a way of maintaining chalk grassland, which is needed. These types of projects are important internationally*" – Panel member

4.25 Improvements to climate resilience were also recorded as an indirect impact of LEI projects. Through project interviews, officers mentioned the following interventions that impacted the climate resilience of landscapes in the affected areas:

- an increase in habitat patch sizes and a reduction in fragmentation;
- storage of carbon and sequestration through tree and hedge planting, creation of grassland and more sensitive management of existing habitats; and
- improving climate resilience of historic features through structural repairs and removal of vegetation.

4.26 Therefore, improvements to both habitat and historic features were seen to improve their climate resilience but as an indirect impact of LEI project interventions.

4.27 A large number of funded organisations believed that there was a beneficial impact on wildlife; 72% of organisations either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. One organisation noted that they disagreed with the statement. However, the interview with the project officer from the organisation clarified that this was due to their project focusing on historic feature restoration, rather than habitats.

4.28 No project officer interviewed had been involved in a project specifically targeting a species or group. However, some projects were perceived to have made a positive contribution for wildlife. Examples include:

- Restoration of grassland through scrub removal and reintroduction of grazing, which improved sward diversity.
- Increase in pollinators and invertebrates as a result of meadow creation and restoration.
- Protection of bat roosts within historic castle walls.
- Coppicing of woodland and glade management supporting dormice populations and other woodland fauna.

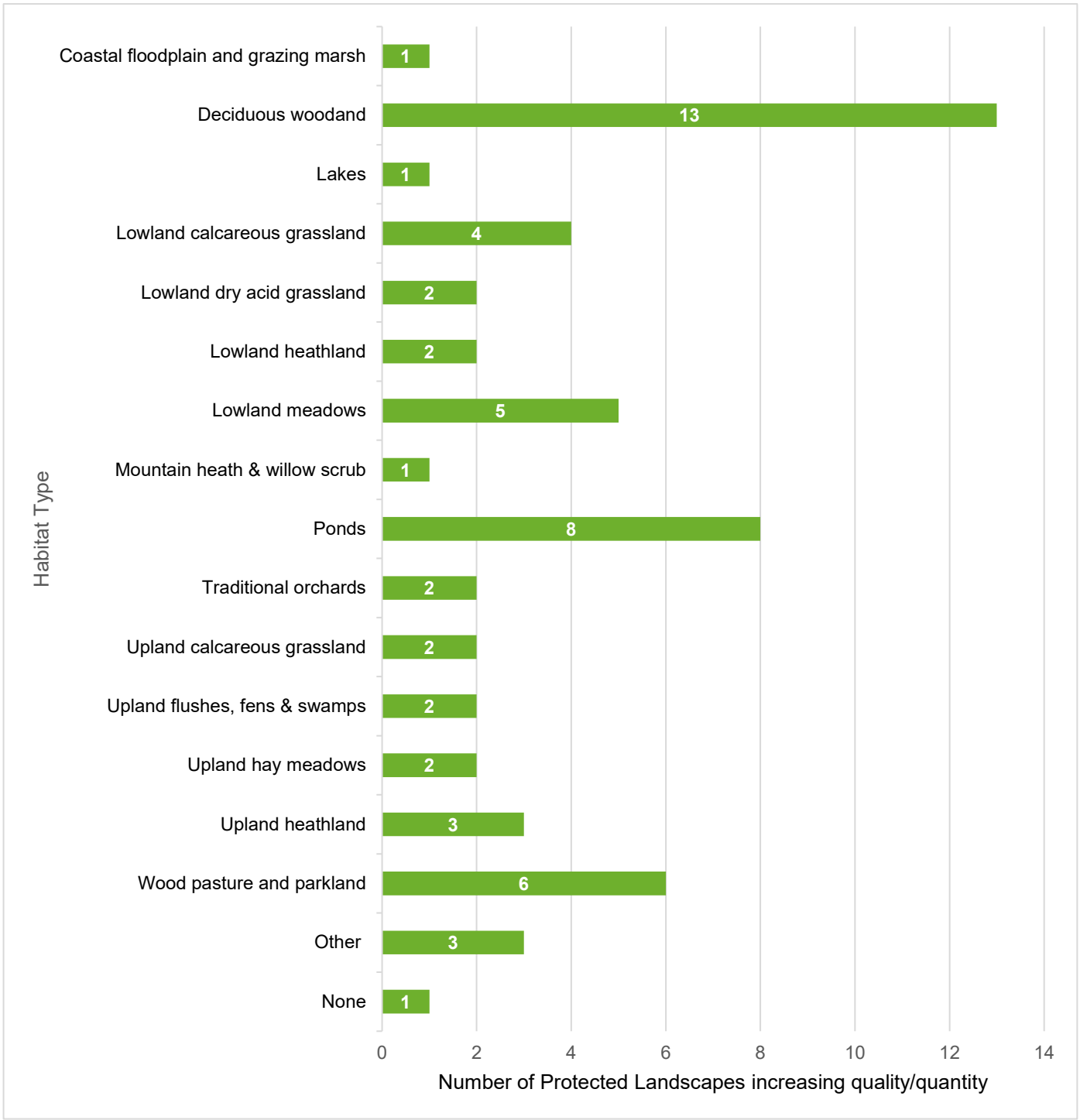
Figure 4.2 Cannock Chase National Landscape: *Gentleshaw Common* – scrub clearance before and after.

Figure 4.3 Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape: *Hidden from View* – new wetland scrapes.

Figure 4.4 Eryri National Park: *Carneddau Connectivity* – created grassland.

Figure 4.5 Peak District National Park: *Longendale Landscape Restoration* – Woodland creation.

Figure 4.6 Online survey response: Which semi-natural habitats have increased in quality and/or quantity since the inception of the programme? N=19



Historic and heritage features

4.29 Funded organisations perceived that LEI projects had a positive impact on the condition of historic and heritage features. All funded organisations that involved a LEI project with a historic or heritage feature believed that there had been a positive change in feature condition. Project interventions were found to have a positive impact on Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Park & Gardens and other above and below ground features. Internal monitoring data provided by the LEI team included the following headline historic outputs up to June 2025:

- 17.96km of drystone wall newly built or restored.
- 22 built features restored or refurbished.

4.30 Stakeholder interviews with Cadw and Historic England highlighted the unique ability of the LEI programme to fund historic feature management and conservation. The scheme was identified as being able to focus directly on restoring historic assets without additional criteria typically required for other grant schemes. As a result, stakeholders found that the scheme has had a significant impact on national heritage management, improving the condition of features in both England and Wales.

> *"Difficult to see how a project would get started and LEI has and should enable that monument to be safeguarded for the future now."* – Panel member
>
> *"LEI has fed into multiple historic applications, these can be challenging to manage and deliver … LEI has allowed that integration."* - Panel member

4.31 Therefore, the LEI programme was perceived as delivering other environmental benefits. This included protecting and enhancing semi-natural habitats and historic features whilst indirectly improving their climate resilience and supporting associated wildlife.

Figure 4.7 Lake District National Park: *Highlighting History at Lowther* – lime kiln restoration.

Figure 4.8 Lake District National Park: *Highlighting History at Lowther* – historic dew pond restoration.

Project delivery challenges

4.32 General challenges were identified in project interviews, but none were found to change the scope or scale of a project. However, the programme timeline was sometimes affected. As a result, no challenges were attributed to affecting the level of impact projects had on semi-natural habitat, wildlife and historic features. Challenges identified during interviews included:

- Inflation in cost of labour and products after agreement of grant amount.
- Delays to intervention due to extreme weather events, drought or flooding conditions.
- Delays due to waiting for planning permission, consent or licenses.
- Challenges around securing match funding.
- Landowners changing their mind on location and specification, which resulted in either finding another landowner in some cases.
- Delays in receiving funds making it hard to pay landowners on time.
- Restrictions and complexities around working on and around Scheduled Monuments, near rivers and within Designated Sites.
- Staff turnover within partner organisations.

4.33 It should be noted that all challenges referenced in the evaluation were external to the LEI scheme administration, with the exception of delays in receiving funds. Such challenges are frequently experienced in project management and should not be attributed as an impact of the LEI scheme.

> "*There were no changes in the scope of the project once it began, though there were challenges with delivery, such as funding delays and environmental constraints, which altered the programme of the project.*"

4.34 Overall, LEI projects have experienced challenges but this was perceived as not impacting the outputs and outcomes of projects so far. Most challenges are not a direct impact of the LEI scheme. Instead, the programme has helped mitigate issues, for example the flexible nature of the scheme has allowed for project programmes to be rescheduled as necessary, and specifications altered.

> "*The flexibility of the programme has been very helpful …works have had to be delayed due to uncontrollable factors such as weather. To be able to delay works has allowed us to still deliver the intended outputs."*

Has the project adversely affected environmental features, such as wildlife sites and historic features?

4.35 LEI projects were perceived by funded organisations as having little or no adverse impact on environmental and historic features. 89% of organisations believed that there had been no inadvertent adverse environmental impacts as a result of their project, the remaining 11% were unsure.

4.36 However, during one project interview a negative unintended impact was recorded, which mentioned the carbon footprint from use of machinery. Other negative unintended impacts were viewed as temporary. These included: visibility of infrastructure being temporarily increased after felling and replacing with native broadleaf planting; carbon being released through tree removal but eventual carbon sequestration as planted trees mature.

4.37 Despite this, there were no significant concerns by projects officers or stakeholders interviewed that LEI projects were having a negative impact on wildlife sites and historic features.

Social and Economic Criteria

Has the programme contributed to improved public access to, and enjoyment of, the landscape?

4.38 Funded organisations believed that there was a positive difference in the access, interpretation of the landscape, and diversity of visitors as a result of their projects. The following findings from the online survey form have been summarised below and supplemented with evidence from project interviews and internal monitoring data from the LEI team:

- Over 61% of organisations in the survey form felt that access to the landscape had increased as a result of LEI projects. During project interviews, interventions such as new footpaths and opening up of previously inaccessible areas through scrub and woodland management were perceived as resulting in increased access.
  - 31.47km of paths, walking routes or bridleways created/restored.
  - 15.31km of improved vehicle access.
- Over 67% of organisations in the survey form believed that the quality of public access had improved. During project interviews, interventions such as path surfacing, drainage work, car park improvements and accessibility improvements such as widening of paths were perceived as resulting in improved access.
  - 15 culverts repaired/replaced.
  - 11 new bridges installed.
  - Four carparks created or improved.

  - 92 new gates installed.

- Better interpretation of the landscape was a slightly less common social impact of the LEI programme. Over 56% of organisations in the survey form felt that there was better interpretation of the landscape as result of LEI projects. During project interviews, interventions such as installation of interpretation boards, educational talks and walks were perceived as resulting in improved interpretation.
  - 116 signs installed.
- 33% of organisations agreed in the survey form that the number of visitors to the landscape had increased. However, during interviews, it was apparent that no data was collected on visitor numbers; instead, visible increases in visitors were noted as an explanation. The lack of monitoring was potentially perceived as a reason for 22% of officers not knowing if there had been any change.

"The new and improved paths have also provided access to restored areas of the site with alternative viewpoints increasing the enjoyment of the project areas."

4.39 In cases where organisations disagreed with the above statements, it was interpreted from interviews that this was likely due to project officers stating that the projects mainly focused on landscape enhancement for environmental or historic benefits rather than access or visitor experience.

4.40 One unintended impact was identified as result of improved access. A project partner did notice that greater access across the site, which included accessible kissing gates, had meant that more people were using the site for dirt bikes and off-road vehicles. This was an issue prior to the project, but the LEI project had exacerbated the issue.

4.41 Overall, project officers and stakeholders believe that the LEI programme has had a positive impact on improving access to, and enjoyment of, the landscape.

Figure 4.9 High Weald National Landscape: *Wonderful Woods* - before and after access path improvements.

Figure 4.10 New Forest National Park: *New Forest Access and Landscape Enhancement* - culvert repairs and path re-instatement.

How has the programme promoted a partnership approach and/or community involvement?

4.42 Communities or partnerships have had a significant impact on the development, design, and implementation of projects. 94% of funded organisations said that communities helped across different stages of their projects. Project interviews identified that communities or partnerships were involved in:

- providing advice on specialists works particularly historic feature and boundary restoration;
- the delivery of volunteer activities;
- implementation of habitat and historic works;
- engaging with landowners to encourage participation; and
- providing local input into specifications for access and habitat improvements.

4.43 The main impact of community and partner engagement identified by project officers and stakeholders were the strengthened relationships between the Protected Landscape team and landowners, eNGOs, local authorities and community groups. During interviews, it was identified that this had resulted in the following additional impacts:

- Interest and development of another partnership LEI project.
- Enabling engagement in harder to reach, less engaged areas of the designated area.
- Empowered single and groups of landowners to deliver environmental projects and develop their understanding of how they can contribute to landscape-level outcomes.
- Empowered community groups to take on more landscape projects.
- Interest and development of a Landscape Recovery Scheme with the partnership developed through LEI.
- Facilitating cross-organisational thinking to find solutions to landscape problems.
- Unintended opportunity to rebuild relationships with local landowners after years of absence in the National Landscape.

"The investment from National Grid has built up our professional reputation in the landscape which means we can have more meaningful conversation with farmers that might lead to 20 years of investment…the investment has allowed us to open doors and discuss grander ambitions with landowners."

"The landowner developed strong personal relationships with volunteers and local groups, which have been sustained beyond the project."

"Fantastic partnership working in terms of volunteers…improved relationships, strengthened and enforced by LEI work. A good model for future work." – Panel member

"This funding has enabled people to bring things to the table and discuss what they are doing locally, share problems and address barriers. Information and skills sharing."

4.44 Panel members also found that the LEI scheme had facilitated improved partnership working between panel members and between their organisations and external partners.

"The best thing about projects is that there is an integrated approach across the Panel, and CADW and Historic England part of this, good for LEI." – Panel member

"Positively it has impacted external partnerships. It is something else we are involved with, and they can raise awareness" – Panel member

4.45 The opportunity to fund project officer time was noted during interviews as having a positive impact on capacity.

"LEI has allowed us to employ someone for the past few years to deliver the scheme. It has enabled us to consider a Landscape Recovery Scheme. 'It has been a useful tool for us to make sure our team is adequately resourced."

"Included 1.5 days for a project officer which has kept a staff member employed. Their contract was due to end at the end of March but funding their time through LEI projects (3 in total) for the next three years. It has increased our resource capacity."

4.46 However, the most significant challenge identified during the evaluation was related to internal management. LEI funding was perceived by officers to have had a negative impact on capacity within organisations. 56% of organisations stated that internal capacity had been impacted, 11% were unsure, and 33% perceived there to be no impact.

4.47 It was noted during the project interviews that the time-intensive nature of the projects, particularly filling out the application, the delivery of the projects and project management was an unintended impact to organisations. The time originally allocated to projects by National Park and National Landscape teams were often exceeded due to programme delays as a result of changes to specifications, difficulties with contracting and weather delays.

4.48 It should be noted that unintended impacts had caused programme delays, so the LEI scheme is not responsible for the additional resource required which impacted capacity. Under-forecasting of time needed for project management was also identified as impacting resource capacity.

4.49 However, most officers agreed that in future applications, a greater amount of time would be budgeted for project management to account for actual time required and any potential programme delays.

"If anything we hadn't anticipated how much resource the project would take to coordinate the landowners. It is easy in big partnership projects to underestimate the amount of time doing the partnership working bit and not the actual delivery."

4.50 Therefore, the LEI programme has helped support additional resource in funded organisations. Despite this, some LEI projects did state a negative impact on resource capacity as a result of unintended impacts. However, the ability of the programme to fund project officer time provides a solution, with project officers identifying more accurate time requirements for future projects, as a result of project experience.

"It has been resource extensive in terms of time input for the park which has meant in future projects we put in funding for a project officer role."

How have projects impacted sustainable and economic development in the area?

4.51 The role of LEI projects has been critical in supporting local suppliers and services. All funded organisations believed that their project had contributed to local services. Contractors supplying fencing, tree surgery, felling, surface materials and dry-stone walling restoration were all listed as locally sourced in interviews. This positive local economic impact was identified during the officer interviews, and internal monitoring data collected by the LEI team reports that 346 local contractors have been engaged with projects up until June 2025.

4.52 Multi-phased projects were an unintended positive impact of using a local contractor. Multi-phased projects involved a second or third project within the same site, building upon outputs delivered during the previous LEI project. For example, one heritage project is now on its second phase of restoring castle walls, due to the success of the first project; a third is currently in development. Therefore, LEI projects have had a positive impact providing further work for local services.

"We have been able to offer stability to contractors, which has been great. Our Waller has been really engaged with archaeology and history. Retaining him has been a real advantage."

Figure 4.11 Dorset National Landscape: *Reconnecting the Ridgeway* - stone wall restoration.

Have projects provided educational opportunities?

4.53 Educational opportunities were provided during the delivery of LEI projects. Over 61% of funded organisations either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that projects have had a positive impact on the local skill base. This was mainly delivered through local contractors. However, there were three interviews which highlighted that a local student had been hired to assist with tree planting, and two where a volunteer had received chainsaw training to gain a license. Officers also identified that volunteer activities around tree and hedge planting and drystone wall restoration would have increased the volunteer skillset. Internal monitoring data collected by the LEI team reports that seven training courses were funded up until June 2025.

> *"The more we repair the monument the more we understand how it is built, so we can then create better interpretation."*

4.54 Additional educational opportunities were provided through volunteer events and interpretation. Over 61% of funded organisations either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that projects have contributed to a greater understanding of the landscape for local communities and visitors. Project interventions that positively impacted the understanding of the landscape included:

- Guided walks with specialists such as archaeologists or local contractors to understand recently restored historic features.
- Signage and interpretation boards for restored historic features or to explain the purpose of habitat restoration works and proposed outcomes.
- Social media posts about project progress and achievement of objectives.

Chapter 5
Key Findings and Conclusion

5.1 The aim of this mid-term evaluation was to deliver an impact evaluation. The evidence collected through the online survey form and interviews clearly suggests that the LEI programme has delivered significant environmental, social and economic impacts.

5.2 The evaluation findings provide a clear message that LEI projects are fulfilling their purpose being perceived by those involved as enhancing the landscape in designated areas and reducing the visual impact on peopling living in or visiting designated areas.

Key Findings

Landscape and Visual Criteria

5.3 The majority of projects aimed to reduce visibility of existing infrastructure by focusing views elsewhere (by completing nature/historic restoration and improving access), with few directly screening pylons through hedgerow and tree planting.

5.4 LEI projects had a significant positive impact on landscape features and character through increasing the quantity and quality of semi-natural habitats, boundary features and historic features. Most officers believed that the character of the landscape would have slowly deteriorated if no LEI intervention had been made.

5.5 All projects were aligned with the relevant Protected Landscape management plan, often relating to enhanced access, nature recovery and habitat/historic management. LEI projects were identified as an important mechanism in delivering management plan goals and objectives. LEI projects also contributed to national goals set out in the EIP and partner organisational goals.

Other Environmental Criteria

5.6 LEI projects had an impact on increasing the condition and quantity of semi-natural habitats. A noticeable improvement to wildlife was noted as an indirect positive impact of project interventions, but no formal monitoring was completed.

5.7 Historic feature projects, often related to boundary features (dry stone walls) or above-ground feature restoration. The LEI programme was identified as a unique grant which can solely focus on historic feature restoration. However,

these projects may not directly impact landscape character or provide significant environmental and social impacts.

Social and Economic Criteria

5.8 Public access and enjoyment of areas are often mentioned as being improved through delivery of the LEI projects. A visual increase in number of visitors was identified but increased diversity of visitors was not often cited as an impact.

5.9 A significant impact of the LEI programme has been the developed partnerships between the Protected Landscapes and eNGOs, landowners, local communities, local groups and local contractors. This has had a knock-on effect leading to new LEI projects but also conversations around Landscape Recovery Schemes and other landscape-led projects.

5.10 Local suppliers were often used throughout the lifecycle of projects, which provided a positive economic impact. Projects also delivered educational opportunities, training of new skills, events, and interpretation. This positively impacted the understanding of the landscape and local skillset.

5.11 The main negative impact identified during the evaluation was on resource capacity. Projects required significant input from existing staff and partners, and time for project management and resourcing was often exceeded. There was not a specific type of project which was recorded as being more resource intensive.

5.12 The impact evaluation found that the principal objectives of projects approved to date appear to be more focused on environmental and historic impacts, compared to social impacts. However, this may have been a result of projects officers not directly monitoring visitor numbers, demographics or feedback.

Additional key findings:

5.13 All project officers were very confident in delivering the impacts stated during their interview. However, changes in funding, devolution of government and lack of continued management or trained staff to carry out management were all noted as factors that could impact the short- and long-term delivery of the projects.

5.14 The legacy of projects was also highlighted as an important criterion that should be considered. The short- and long-term impacts delivered by the LEI projects are at risk of being lost if the new or improved landscape features cannot be maintained beyond the maintenance payment. This should be a consideration for project officers in the project development stage.

Evaluation recommendations

The purpose of the following recommendations is to encourage the communication of the positive impacts that the LEI programme is delivering but to also highlight where improvements can be made for the future of the scheme.

- Develop **formal case studies** for different types of projects e.g. habitat creation/restoration, historic feature restoration and access improvements. Use the case studies to internally and externally showcase the impact of the programme and increase engagement and awareness. Case studies should involve monitoring data to specifically quantify outputs and outcomes.
- Explore **potential funding** for National Landscape and National Parks **to promote the LEI scheme** and encourage engagement from a wider variety of landowners. Resource capacity was identified as a limiting factor, which may prevent proactive engagement with harder to reach landowners and less engaged areas within National Parks and National Landscapes.
- Consider developing a **facilitation/project development fund** to support landowners to collaborate and design applications. This impact evaluation has highlighted the positive impact of partnership working during the development and implementation phase. A facilitation fund would help support the development of new partnerships and help mitigate against the constraint of resource capacity.
- **Consider the legacy of projects** during the project development phase, which may involve a **legacy criteria question** which focuses on securing long-term management past the project's lifespan. It was evident that project officers shared concerns about the uncertainty of on-going funding to maintain restored/created features beyond the scheme. There is a risk that the longevity of impacts delivered are limited to the ability to continue to manage outputs.
- Consider a **process evaluation** which aims to understand the user experience of the scheme and how this impacts the effectiveness of the programme. This impact evaluation has clearly recorded the impacts delivered so far by LEI projects but there is not an understanding of how the administration and delivery of projects impact the effectiveness of the scheme.
- Consider **expanding the eligibility area** for the LEI scheme outside of designated areas. Electricity transmission lines run through undesignated areas which also have important landscape features. The

scale of enhancement to landscapes within England and Wales through LEI funding could be significantly increased if land outside of designated areas were eligible. This could significantly increase the positive impact of the scheme and place National Grid as a champion of landscape restoration and management.

Conclusion

5.15 It is evident that funded organisations, panel members and key partners involved in the LEI programme perceive the scheme to deliver a variety of positive impacts.

5.16 It is clear that the LEI scheme is perceived to be a unique mechanism to fund landscape management and restoration. Without the scheme landscape character would have likely deteriorated, with important natural and historic features damaged and/or lost.

5.17 The LEI programme is also a key delivery tool for achieving local and national policies and plans. The programme is viewed as a vital fund for project partners to deliver objectives and goals aimed at nature recovery, climate resilience, heritage conservation and improving access to nature.

5.18 Key interventions delivered by LEI projects that have positively impacted landscape character and enhanced biodiversity and historic features were:

- Increased quantity and quality of semi-natural habitats; and
- Restoration of historic and heritage buildings, boundary features and other above ground features.

5.19 Social and economic impacts were cited slightly less often than landscape and environmental impacts. The most common social impact was the development of partnership working. The LEI programme has been reported to have a significant positive impact on developing working partnerships between National Landscape and National Park teams and external partners such as eNGOs, private landowners, local authorities and community groups. Developed partnerships has resulted in new opportunities across the landscapes, resulting in further landscape enhancements and projects outside of LEI.

5.20 Overall, no specific type of project was found to deliver a greater impact than others. Due to the project eligibility criteria most projects have been developed to deliver against a variety of landscape, environmental and social criteria. However, historic projects, specifically building restoration, were identified as being more focal with limited environmental impact.

5.21 It is clearly evident from this mid-term evaluation that the LEI programme is successful meeting its purpose to:

- reduce the visual impact of grid infrastructure on people living in or visiting the designated area; and
- to enhance the landscape in the designated area.

5.22 This impact evaluation has collected evidence relevant to a process evaluation. To record and identify how well the programme has operated from an administration perspective, this evaluation recommends the delivery of a full process evaluation.

5.23 In conclusion, all evaluation questions were answered by evidence collected through the online survey form and interviews. Therefore, it can be summarised that the LEI programme to date has delivered an array of landscape and visual impacts, alongside other social, economic and environmental impacts.

Appendix A
Online Survey Form

A.1 Below is a copy of the online survey form presented in a Microsoft Form. Numbers in brackets relate to the evaluation question the question is aiming to answer.

Instructions:

A.2 We have developed this survey on behalf of National Grid to evaluate the LEI programme.

A.3 The main aim of the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) mid-term evaluation is to document the impact of the programme and measure the benefits delivered across English and Welsh designated landscapes. The impact evaluation will provide an opportunity to collate and provide evidence of environmental, social, and economic impacts and present the findings to National Grid's wider audience.

A.4 If you belong to an organisation with more than one project officer, please answer these questions on behalf of the entire officer team. If you have delivered more than one project, please answer these questions according to your experience across all projects.

A.5 This survey contains XX questions and should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. There are a number of optional text boxes where you can provide further detail/anecdotal evidence if you would like to. A select group will be invited to a subsequent online interview where anecdotal evidence will also be gathered.

[Privacy disclaimer]

Context:

1. Which Protected/Designated Landscape do you represent? Open text
2. How many LEI projects are you delivering/have you delivered? Open text
3. How long have you been involved in delivering the LEI programme for your organisation?
4. Were you involved in delivering LEI for another organisation before you joined your current organisation?
   - If so, how long is your cumulative experience?
5. Are you submitting this form on behalf of any other officers, if so how many? Open text

Landscape and visual criteria

6. Do you think the visibility of existing infrastructure has changed as a result of the LEI project(s)? (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree) (include 'don't know' response) **(1.1)**

7. How long do you think it will take for interventions to have a significant impact on reducing the visibility of existing infrastructure? **(1.1)**
   - Immediate change
   - 1-2 years
   - 3-5 years

- 5-10 years
- 10 years+

8. What are the main interventions that have caused the greatest change in visibility of existing infrastructure? **(1.2)**
   - Traditional boundary restoration/creation (e.g. hedgerows, drystone walling, ditch creation/ restoration)
   - Hard boundary features (e.g. fencing, walls)
   - Access & Recreation (e.g. bridge repair, car park improvements, path creation/repair, new benches)
   - Grassland (e.g. Management, restoration, creation)
   - Heathland (e.g. management, restoration, creation)
   - Scrub (e.g. clearance, management)
   - Tree planting (e.g. individual or grouped)
   - Wetland (e.g. ponds, rivers, wetland)
   - Woodland (e.g. woodland creation, ancient woodland restoration)
   - Not applicable
   - Other – free text

9. Overall, how has the condition of existing landscape features changed? (Scale of 1-5, significant decline to significant improvement) **(2.3)**

10. To what extent has/have project(s) strengthened landscape character and distinctiveness? (scale of 1 to 5, strongly weakened, to highly strengthened) **(3.1)**

11. Would the project(s) have happened without LEI funding? **(3.2)**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know

12. Do you think the level of tranquillity (A state of calm and quietude associated with peace, considered to be a significant asset of landscape) has changed as a result of project(s) implementation? **(3.3)**
    - Yes – positive
    - Yes – negative
    - No change

13. To what extent has/have project(s) contributed to the following goals? (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree, 6 - 'don't know') **(4.2)**:
    a. Thriving plants and wildlife (scale of 1 to 5, significant decrease to significant increase)
    b. Mitigating and adapting to climate change (scale of 1 to 5, strongly weakened, to highly strengthened)
    c. Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement (scale of 1 to 5, significant decrease to significant increase)

Other environmental criteria

14. Which semi-natural habitats have increased in quality and/or quantity since the inception of the programme? **(5.1)**
    - Blanket bog
    - Calaminarian grassland
    - Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh

- Coastal saltmarsh
- Coastal sand dunes
- Coastal vegetated shingle
- Deciduous woodland
- Limestone pavements
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadows
- Lowland raised bog
- Maritime cliff & slope
- Mountain heath & willow scrub
- Mudflats
- Purple moor grass & rush pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline lagoons
- Traditional orchards
- Upland calcareous grassland
- Upland hay meadows
- Upland heathland
- Upland flushes, fens & swamps
- Wood Pasture & Parkland
- Lakes
- Ponds
- None
- Other: free text

15. Do you think the condition of historic and heritage features have changed as a result of the project(s) implementation? **(5.2)**
    - Yes – positive
    - Yes – negative
    - No change
    - Not applicable
16. Optional question if yes: What features have been impacted?
    - Scheduled Monuments (above and below ground)
    - Listed Buildings
    - Registered Park & Gardens

- Registered battlefields
- Non-registered parks and gardens/ country parks
- Conservation Areas
- Other/Specific features: Open text

17. To what extent do you agree with the statement that the programme has had a beneficial impact on wildlife? (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree) **(5.3)**

18. Do you think the project has improved the resilience of the landscape to climate change? **(5.4)**

- Yes – positive
- No - negative
- Unsure

19. 19. Do you think there were any unintended impacts on wildlife sites or historic features? **(6.1)**

- Yes – positive
- Yes- negative
- No
- Unsure

20. Do you think there have been any inadvertent adverse environmental impacts, including pollution? **(6.2)**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Social and economic criteria

21. To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to the project(s):

Public access to the landscape has increased (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree) **(7.1)**

- The quality of access routes across the landscape has improved (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree) **(7.2)**
- There is a better interpretation of the landscape, i.e information boards (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree) **(7.3)**
- The project has increased the number and diversity of visitors to the landscape **(7.4)**

22. Have communities or partnerships been involved in the development, design or implementation of the project(s)? **(8.1)**

- Yes
- No

23. Did the project(s) involve any interpretation or promotional interventions e.g. social media posts, newsletter, website pages?

- Yes
- No

24. Optional question if yes: do you think the interpretation or promotional intervention increased internal and external awareness of the LEI programme? (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree)

25. Do you think the project(s) has/have contributed to local suppliers, services and/or materials that were sourced locally? **(9.1)**

- Yes

- No
- Unsure
- Comments: Open text

26. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

- The project has had a positive impact on the local skill base (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree) **(10.1)**
- The project has contributed to a greater understanding of the landscape for local communities and visitors. **(10.1)**

27. Do you think LEI funding has had an impact on raising capacity at your organisation? (scale 1-5, strongly disagree to strongly agree) (include 'don't know' response) **(4.3)**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Comments: open text

Appendix B

Project Interview Script

Project Interviews

Interviewer script in *italics.*

Before starting the interview, please ask whether the interviewee is happy with the information provided in the project sheet and privacy notice provided in the email invite. Please confirm that we have their verbal consent and they are happy for us to record the interview for notes purposes. Please ask whether they have any questions about the interview or evaluation.

Interview begins:

Thank you for your time today. This interview should roughly last between 45 minutes to 1 hour and the main aim of this interview is to understand the impact of (insert project name). We are completing an impact evaluation, so our questions will be focused on project impact rather than the process of planning or delivery.

The first few questions I am going to ask you aim to record the purpose of the project, its impacts and your experiences during the delivery of the project.

Context questions:

1. Can you briefly tell me a bit about your project?
2. Is your project live or completed?
3. What is your involvement with the project?
4. What did or will your project set out to achieve?
5. Were there any changes in the scale or scope of the project once it began? If yes, what caused this, and did it have an impact on the project's outcomes?
6. Did you experience any challenges were planning or delivering the project?
7. To what extent would the project have been completed without LEI funding?
8. To what extent would the project have been completed without match funding?
9. Can you tell me whether there have been any unintended impacts of the project? This can be positive or negative.

This interview had been divided into three sections based on the application criteria 1) Landscape and visual criteria 2) Other environmental criteria and 3) Social and economic criteria. We have also added a few questions at the end around the legacy of the project. Before each section, I will give you a brief overview of the criteria and also give you a chance at the end to provide any additional information not already captured.

Landscape and Visual Criteria

The landscape and visual criteria are classed as primary criteria that all projects must deliver against. We have shaped the following questions around the criteria but focusing solely on the impact of the project. When answering these questions please consider what short-term impacts (immediately delivered or within 1-2 years) and longer-term impacts (3 years+ that may not have been delivered yet) are associated with this project. (Interviewer to prompt for short-term and long-term impacts during questioning).

10. Can you tell me how the project has reduced the visibility of existing infrastructure?

11. How will the project affect landscape features, will there be any positive or negative changes?

12. Do you think the project has had an impact on landscape character and distinctiveness?

13. What project interventions have caused an impact?

14. Do you think the character of landscapes would have changed if the project had not been implemented?

15. Which interventions have had or will have the greatest impact on tranquillity (A state of calm and quietude associated with peace, considered to be a significant asset of landscape)? Why?

The next few questions focus on the project's impact on the delivery of local and national policies and plans.

16. Can you tell me how the project has contributed to the achievement of objectives and targets set out in the Protected or Designated Landscape management plan? Please specify which objectives and targets.

17. Can you tell me whether the project has contributed to any of the following goals set out in the Environmental Improvement plan?

- Thriving plants and wildlife?
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change?
- Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement?

18. Are there are other project impacts related to landscape or visibility that you would like me to note down before moving onto the next section?

Other environmental criteria

This next section focuses on other environmental criteria, primarily climate, wildlife and heritage impacts. Like the previous section, the questions have been based on the application criteria. Please again consider, when answering, whether the project has, or expects to deliver any impacts on the environment, to make sure we capture both short- and long-term impacts.

19. Can you tell me whether the project has resulted in an increase in the cover of semi-natural habitats? Please specify which habitat types.

- Do you know approximately how much (ha/m)?

20. Can you tell me whether the condition of semi-natural habitats have either increased or decreased as a result of the project? Please specify which habitat types.

21. Do you think the project has had an impact on the climate resilience of the landscape? For example:

- Have existing habitats been extended or linked to increase the patch size, or reduce fragmentation? If so by how much (Ha)
- How have management practices changed and has this had any impact on the resilience of habitats to climate change?
- Have woodlands or other features that will capture carbon been planted? If so, how much? (Ha/m)

22. Do you think the project has had or will have an impact on wildlife? Please specify any target species.

23. Were any of these unintended?

24. Has the project had an impact on the management and conservation of a historic or heritage feature?

- Has the condition of the feature changed as a result?

25. Can you tell me whether this project has caused any changes to boundary features e.g. hedgerows, stone walls or fencing?

26. Are there are other project impacts related to climate, wildlife or historic features that you would like me to note down before moving on?

Social and economic criteria

This next section focuses on social and economic criteria. As in previous sections, please consider when answering whether the project has or expects to deliver any impacts.

27. Do you think public access and enjoyment of the project area has changed because of the project?
    - What interventions have worked well or less well for public access and visitor experience?
28. Do you think the project has or will impact the number and diversity of visitors to the landscape?
    - Have you completed any monitoring to measure this?
29. Do you think the project has had an impact on local partnerships or communities?
    - Have any community groups or partnerships been involved in the project?
    - Did you receive any feedback?
30. Were any local suppliers, services or products used during the project?
    - Were the services or products that they provided satisfactory?
    - Were there any implications of using local suppliers in comparison to national suppliers?
31. Has the project delivered any educational opportunities e.g. training, signage, interpretation, events?
    - Who do you think this has impacted and how?
32. Can you tell me whether this project has impacted raising capacity at your organisation? If yes, how?
33. Are there are other social or economic impacts that you would like me to note down?

Legacy questions

This final section aims to gather information on the legacy of the project but also what may impact this. Please consider any challenges or supporting factors that will impact the legacy of the project when answering.

34. How confident are you that the project has or will have delivered the impacts stated during this interview?
35. What has or could impact the delivery of both short and long-term impacts?
36. Finally, can you tell me what you think will be the legacy impact of this project?

Thank you for your time today, is there anything else you would like to add before we finish the interview?

Appendix C
Stakeholder Interview Script

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviewer script in *italics.*

Before starting the interview, please ask whether the interviewee is happy with the information provided in the project sheet and privacy notice provided in the email invite. Please confirm that we have their verbal consent and ask whether they have any questions about the interview or evaluation.

Thank you for your time today. This interview should roughly last between 15 – 30 minutes and the main aim of this interview is to understand the impact of the LEI programme on your organisation. We are completing an impact evaluation, so our questions will be focused on programme impact rather than the process of planning or delivery.

The first few questions I am going to ask you aim to record the details about your organisation and its involvement with the LEI programme.

Context questions:

(some questions may be answered through a desk-based analysis)

1. Which organisation do you represent?
2. How many projects have been funded through LEI for your organisation?
3. What project types have been delivered through LEI funding and please briefly summarise outcomes and impacts?
   - Accessibility, facilities and engagement e.g. educational opportunities, access improvements, car parking, toilets, seating.
   - Boundary features e.g. create, restore or manage boundary features such as hedgerows or stone walls.
   - Habitat e.g. habitat creation, restoration or management.
   - Historic features e.g. conservation or restoration of historic features such as scheduled monuments or listed buildings.

Strategic questions

The next few questions aim to gather information on your organisation's experience with the LEI programme, specifically its impact on internal and external objectives, partnerships and educational opportunities.

4. Do you think the LEI programme has positively or negatively contributed to your organisational objectives and aims? Please specify which.
5. Similarly, do you think your involvement with the LEI programme has allowed you to positively or negatively contribute to local and national objectives and plans? E.g. Environmental Improvement Plan goals, LNRS. Please specify which.
6. Has LEI funding had an impact on the capacity at your organisation? If yes, how so?
7. Can you tell me if the LEI programme has impacted internal or external partnerships? Please specify.
8. Has the LEI programme involved partnerships with local suppliers of products, services and/or materials?
   - Has this been a positive or negative experience?

9. Do you think the LEI programme has provided educational opportunities for either paid or volunteer workers at your organisation?

10. Can you tell me whether there have been any unintended impacts during your involvement with the LEI programme, either positive or negative?

11. Are there are other impacts of the LEI programme that you would like me to record before finishing the interview?