

East Linton Community Project



**Climate Action
East Linton**



**East Linton
Horticultural
Society**

Growing Local Food and Supporting the Local Natural World

Survey Report - Jan 2021

Introduction

Following some initial ideas from Climate Action East Linton, a small group was established including representatives from Climate Action East Linton, Horticultural Society and the Primary School Parent Council.

This survey was launched late in 2020 across East Linton area. It was promoted online, in local shops and also in the local free community newsletter, with a copy of the survey form enclosed.

There have been a total of 81 responses received to date and the online survey form has been left open to continue to collect interest.




The survey looked at three main areas:

- Creating a network for wildlife through gardens
- Community garden
- Garden share scheme

The survey also sought other ideas from the community. This report summarises these responses and picks up some of the more interesting examples of comments from participants.

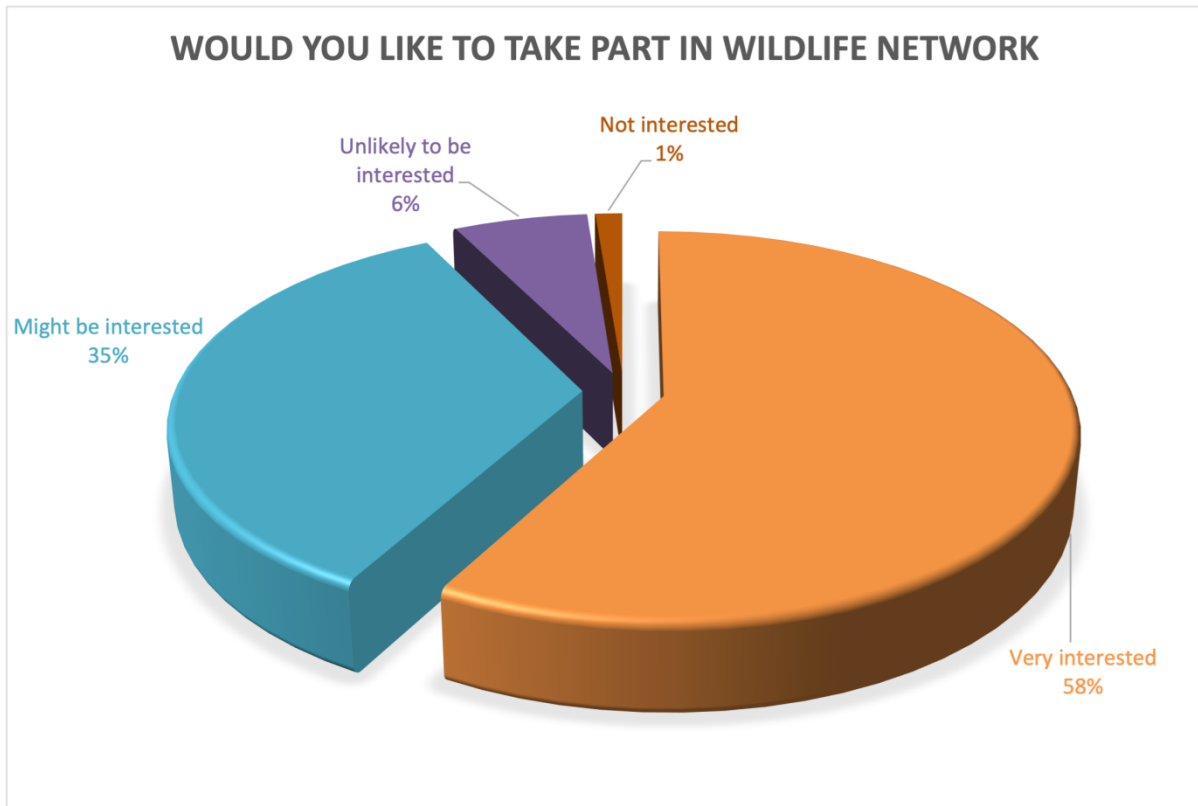
The following report gives details of the results and suggestions received by respondents to these three areas as well as the conclusions of the project team as to what could happen next.

As a very high-level summary of engagement and appeal:

Creating a network for wildlife through gardens	
Community garden	
Garden share scheme	

Network for wildlife

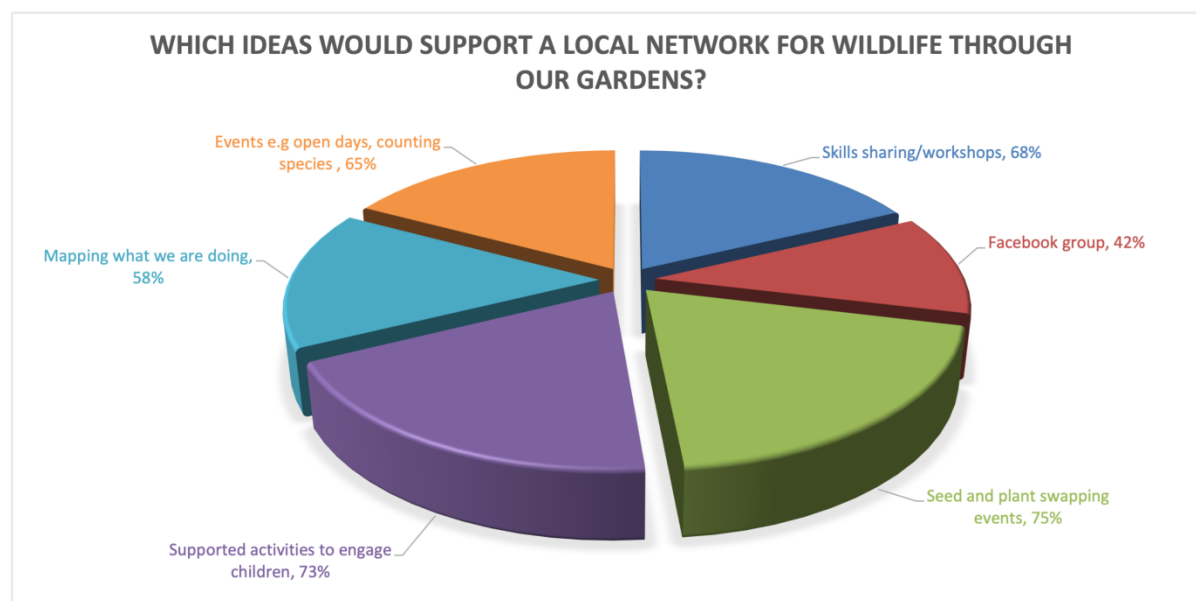
There was an overall favourable response to this potential project with 93% of respondents having some interest in taking part.



These quotes from respondents are representative of many individually worded replies to the question of why they liked or disliked the idea, although worth highlighting that no respondents actually disliked the idea.



There is a keen interest in most of the suggested ideas for supporting a network. However, the use of Facebook is not overly popular. Facebook alone should not therefore be used as a primary support tool.



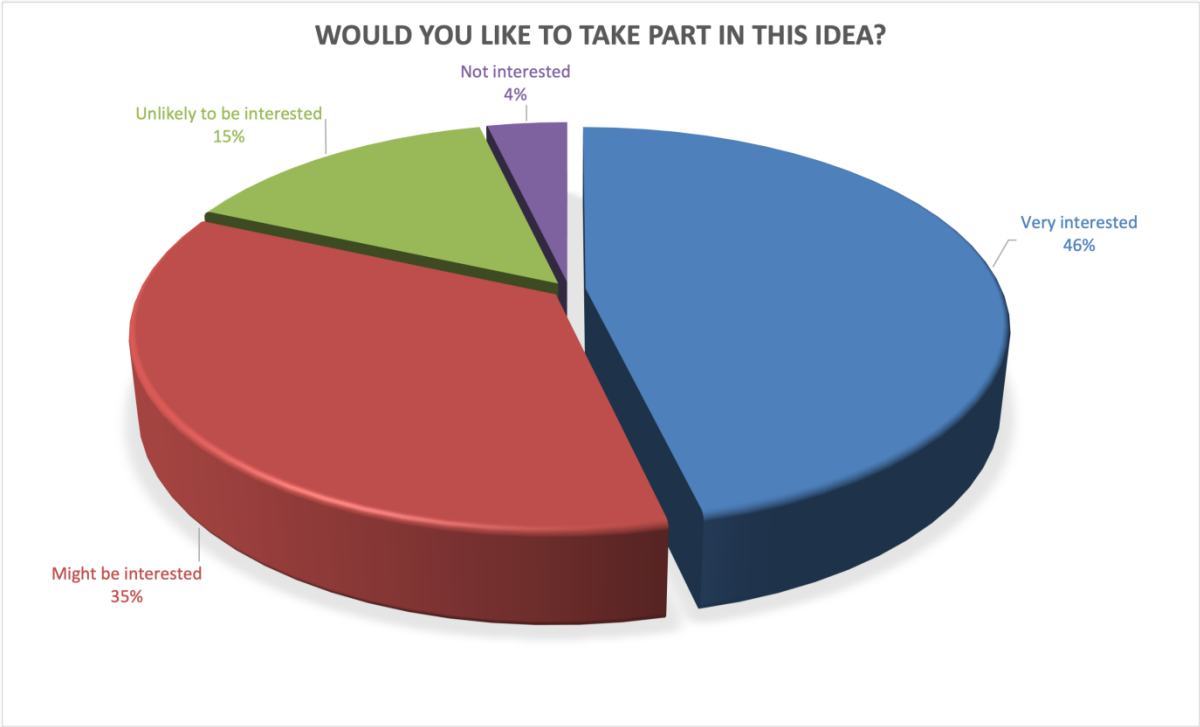
Approximately one third of respondents provided detailed suggestions of ways in which support could be given to this initiative:

- In addition to understanding how we can support wildlife, gain a better understanding of actions which may have a negative impact e.g. raise awareness of the damage plastic grass does to the soil and wildlife
- Having a calendar (virtual perhaps) of tips of what can be done throughout the year to increase wildlife-don't mow May and things like that.
- Tantalizing fliers around the village and simple activities in the school to promote awareness of what is already here/what needs to be saved.
- Possibly ask local businesses to become involved in, to share expertise.
- Encouraging all gardeners to garden organically (especially no inorganic pesticides); encouraging untidy gardens; discouraging burning and instead having beetle banks of rotting twigs etc.; encouraging compost heaps; encouraging planting of native, wildlife-friendly shrubs.
- Practical, on the ground, advice from a person or team of people, by appointment. Encouraging people to think about increasing wildlife in their gardens as an alternative to getting a pet dog or cat. I realise it's not a direct substitute but it's a thought.
- Stop spraying chemicals and use biological controls / Common agreement both to use herbicides or insecticides and slug pellets
- Education events/open events for members of the community/ sharing of knowhow
- A newsletter for those who don't access computers as much (older people and young kids)/ also – note not everyone uses Facebook
- Rewilding generally in surrounding areas
- Permaculture designs – involving schools
- Support for budding, but inexperienced gardeners. Perhaps a stall at the weekend market?
- More indigenous plants - fewer exotics
- Guided ranger walks
- Website, telegram to share ideas/ Knowledge base / FAQ of simple practical tips
- A WhatsApp group

There is clearly sufficient interest in establishing a project to promote, support and publicise a wildlife network around the village. In addition, there are a host of suggestions as to what types of activities/supports and approaches to develop over time.

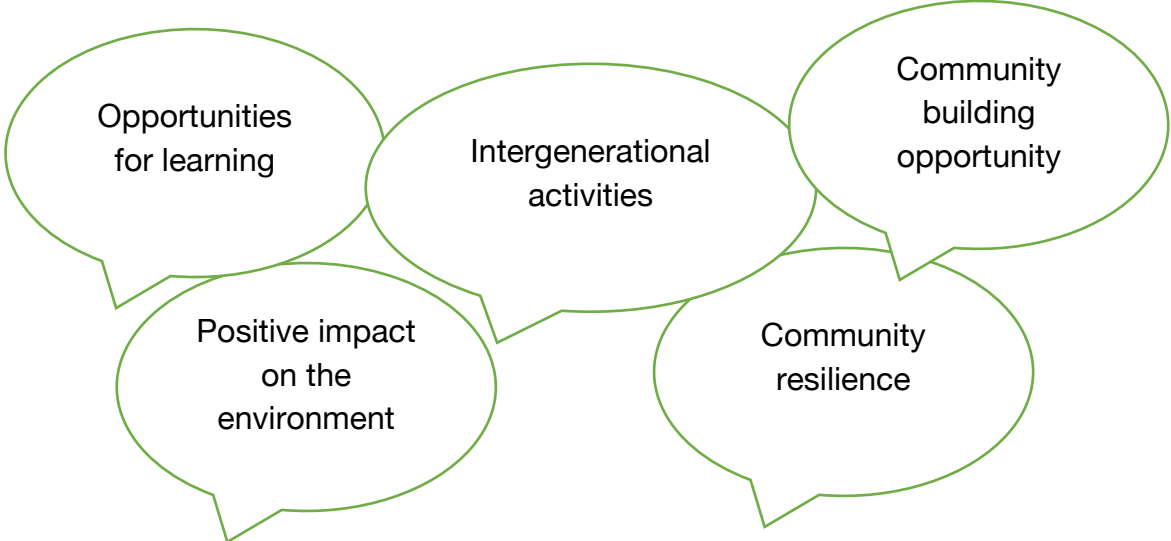
Community Garden

There is a very slightly less enthusiastic response to taking part in a community garden, although there is still a large number of very interested individuals.

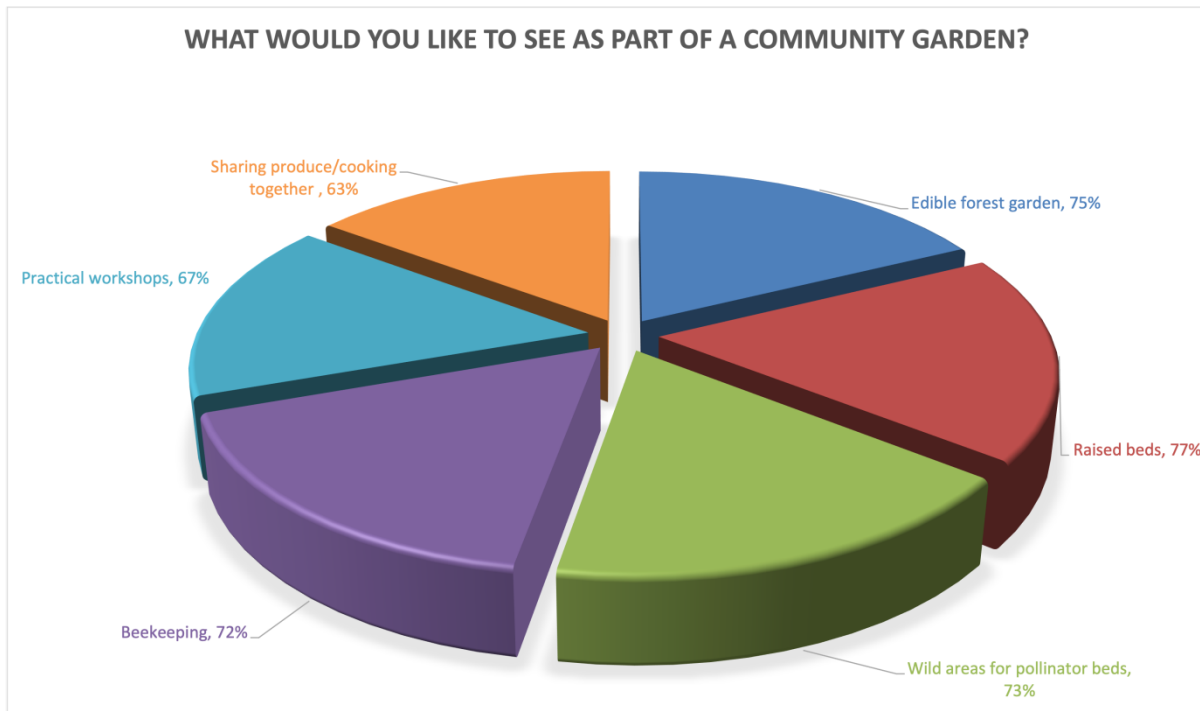


People were asked what they did or didn't like about this idea. There were no comments about why anyone disliked the idea, although some indicated that time commitment to existing garden would likely be a consideration.

The following are the main themes that comments fell within:



In considering what initiatives to include within a community garden, respondents were overwhelming in support of those suggested in the survey.



Under 'other', the following suggestions were also received:

- Covered outdoor area for gathering, cooking and eating locally grown produce
- Plots of land allocated as individual allotments
- Fruit and nut trail at new station?
- Use the Mart polytunnel
- Recommended resources on what we could and should plant in our own gardens to support this
- Community herb garden
- Local 'foraging trail' for each season with advice on what is safe to pick etc
- Chickens?
- Garden tool share
- Permaculture events
- Sensory gardens, raised beds, wheelchair access

Each of the options received considerable additional support when asked which ideas people liked most. Many respondents felt they were all equally beneficial.

Growing produce to share in community and cooking together to skill share and encourage a local and sustainable diet.

Raised beds encourage older folk or those with disablement to get involved and for children to support them – intergenerational.

I honestly can't say as they all have their benefits. I think we need to start small and then grow organically utilising local skills and expertise.

Wild areas – this seems like an obvious and easy thing to do in a time when most gardens tend to be paved or manicured.

In addition to the items specifically listed, people were asked what other ideas they had for a community garden. Around a third of respondents provided specific comment as follows:

- Find the space around East Linton - Be aggressive with the Council!
- To have it in a place that can expand. There is likely to be a lot of building development in the future so creating wild spaces around the village will help to ensure it doesn't become a town that just feels like a commuter belt but retains its charm and natural beauty
- Poly tunnel for growing in winter
- Postings on the area website <http://www.eastlinton.uk.com>
- To allocate plots of land as individual allotments. I know of four community gardens in this area (Belhaven, Athelstaneford, Gilmerton, Haddington) and all of them are in need of more volunteers to work in the gardens. My fear is that after an initial wave of enthusiasm, the same would apply in East Linton. My impression is that individual allotments are far more attractive to most people than communally-run gardens (however disappointing this might be from a communitarian perspective!).
- Community compost
- Community fruit and vegetables for purchase/sharing
- Wooden hut for tool sharing, patio/covered area, social eating etc to promote community fellowship.
- talks, workshops, simple events that empower and inspire those new to gardening, new to the area, new to these concepts to give it a go, feel part of something bigger than themselves and have FUN.
- Lots of seasonal produce
- Wild areas and play areas
- An orchard and wildflower meadow.
- Could we have a community orchard?
- Could it include skills sharing eh word turning, willow weaving etc?
- A stumpery to encourage wildlife. Chickens.
- Potentially a number of small sites around the village where local residents nearby can help with the maintenance and upkeep. Like edible estates do in some communities. Potentially working with council/hort soc to increase the amount of edible growing and reducing some of the ornamentals.
- Allotments share our gardens
- Wild Flowers- especially pollinators, planting more trees - especially since so many house are being built in the area, and workshops are a great idea.
- Workshops on pruning fruit trees
- A native herb garden
- Nest boxes, bat boxes etc.

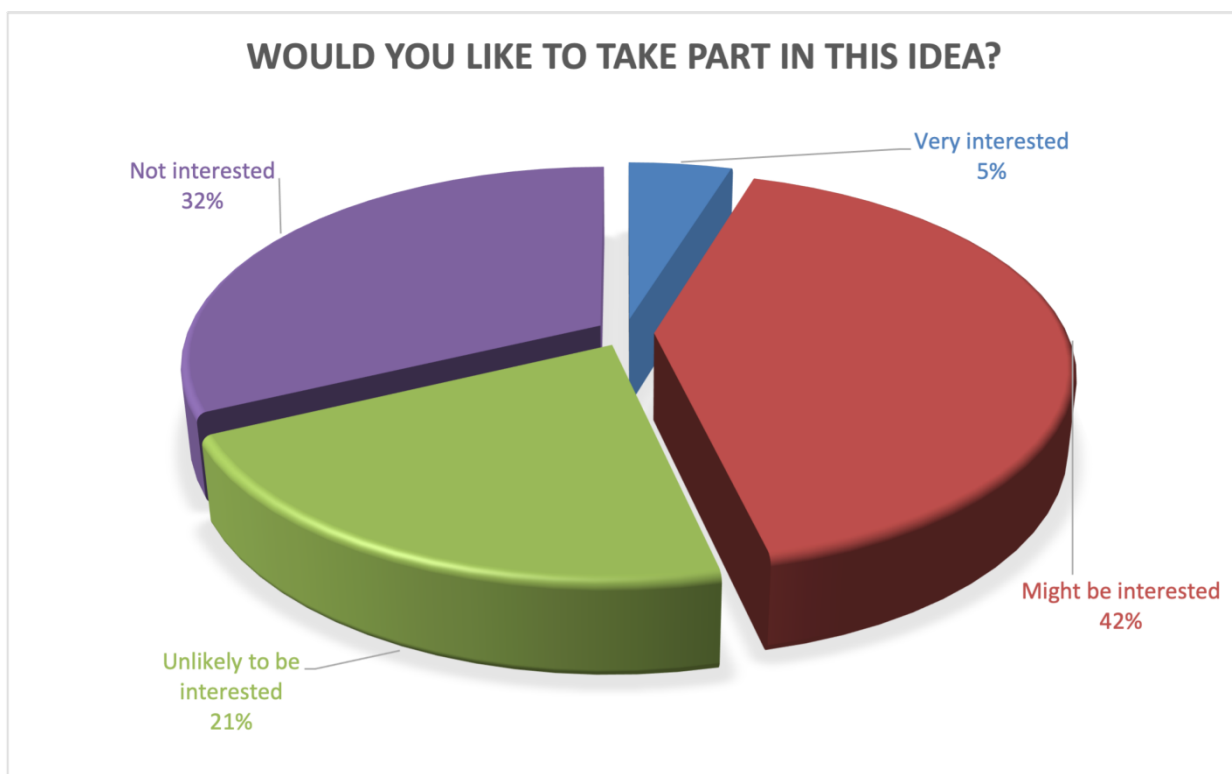
In addition to ideas about what sort of activities/provision a community garden could achieve, they were also extremely helpful with suggestions of land that could be used or people that could be involved. These are not covered here so as not to cause undue concern or excitement by people in the community, and also to ensure individuals identified are not put under any pressure to assist.

Once again, in terms of taking this initiative forward, there is a significant amount of additional information and ideas that can be incorporated into a longer term plan, and which might allow for various locations to be considered and developed over time.

A Garden Share Scheme

The final aspect of this community survey was to identify the potential interest in a garden share scheme. Such schemes are known to be very beneficial to community cohesion, wellbeing etc especially in more urban settings.

Unsurprisingly, the level of interest in this element of the survey was not as high. This likely reflects the extent to which most people living in a more rural setting will tend to have a garden area of their own.



When asked why respondents liked or didn't like the idea, responses tended to relate to people already having their own space to grow. However, there were some who expressed the following comments in support.

Great idea for people to connect and provide access to growing for people who don't have gardens. Also to help those who can't manage their space, as long as they have the understanding it's not free labour.

Well my garden has space for many more people than just me and is a lot of work for me on my own. I would love to share it.

On the negative side, one person indicated that, as a small holder, they had previously offered land for growing to local residents but found there was no interest.

Only 35 respondents indicated any further interest in a garden share scheme by identifying themselves as either a volunteer (24) or sharer (13). Some of these individuals have provided their contact details so it would be feasible to start on this relatively quickly.

The team behind the survey had already had some debate as to whether or not to include this section. It was agreed to include to test what the interest may be. This has proved to be a useful exercise. While there is some interest, and theoretically it would be relatively quick to get such a scheme started in terms of establishing, promoting and managing it.

Next Steps

The group met to discuss the survey results and were very clear that there are a number of existing community groups who have an interest in this area. It was identified as essential to ensure that we don't want to infringe on the work that other groups are already engaging in, but somehow coordinate the establishment of the ideas generated within the survey.

There was a lot of discussion about how these projects could be taken forward but it was recognised that getting a network for wildlife would be the most straightforward to start off. An initial outline of an approach following this report would be fourfold:

1. Initially this report is being circulated to the community for information and will be discussed with the following groups:
 - Dunpender Community Council
 - School and Parent Council
 - Horticultural Society
 - Groundforce Team
 - Formally constituted resident committees/associations
2. The purpose of these discussions will be about establishing the most effective governance over the two projects of the wildlife network and community gardens.
3. Learn best practice from existing organisations who have already created wildlife networks and community gardens in preparation for the projects
4. As an initial step to get things started during spring, tips and ideas to promote what people can do in their own gardens to create individual havens for wildlife will be hosted on a monthly basis on the CAEL website and other local relevant channels