



Natural Economy Northwest

Natural Benefits for Business Pilot: Evaluation

Commissioned from Creative Concern by Natural Economy Northwest in partnership with the Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership and Northwest Biodiversity Forum for a project delivered through the Cumbria Business Environment Network

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1. Preface

This is one in a series of reports produced between 2007 and 2009 within the Natural Economy Northwest (NENW) Programme. NENW is a regional partnership programme led by Natural England, the North West Development Agency and the SITA Trust on behalf of a wide range of economic and environmental partners. The main focus is to deliver priority action 113 in the Regional Economic Strategy, to optimise the natural environment's contribution to the regional economy and quality of life.

The programme also includes the Enriching Nature SITA Trust biodiversity programme and the aspirations of Natural England and other environmental and economic partners to mainstream the natural environment within sustainable economic development. Key work areas within the programme are to:

- increase awareness of the value of the natural economy,
- commission and disseminate research to promote and facilitate delivery,
- provide direction to promote effective use of limited financial resources,
- contribute to the development and delivery of regional and sub-regional strategies,
- facilitate natural economy project development and encourage project delivery,
- promote and facilitate Green Infrastructure and Natural Tourism especially through the Sub-Regional Economic Partnerships and the Tourist Boards,
- encourage strategic investment in natural economy projects, and
- to facilitate training, skills innovation and advice to business.

This particular report was commissioned from Creative Concern, on behalf of the Natural Benefits for Business Cumbria pilot Steering Group, with representatives of Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership, NW Biodiversity Forum, Natural England and Natural Economy Northwest. Advice received from Todd Holden, Programme Director and Melanie Hart of Enworks was gratefully appreciated. Finally, our thanks to Andrew Forsyth, Chair of the Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership, for chairing the Steering Group.

This work along with other NENW information and publications is on our website – www.naturaleconomynorthwest.co.uk. You can contact us through our website. We are interested in the ways that this report has been of use to you so that we can take into account in the further development of the programme.

This report has been commissioned by Natural Economy Northwest in the delivery of its aims, outputs and outcomes and it should not be assumed that it represents the policy of the funders – Northwest Regional Development Agency, Natural England and the SITA Trust.

Dr Will Williams

Programme Director
Natural Economy Northwest

2. Overview of Natural Benefits for Business pilot

This evaluation is for the Natural Benefits for Business (NB4B) pilot. The pilot was initiated by the NW Biodiversity Forum and the Natural Economy Northwest Programme working directly with the Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership and the Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency (CREA).

The aim of the Cumbria NB4B pilot was to look for ways in which biodiversity, the conservation of biological resources, can be made relevant for commercial organisations. The pilot has attempted to enable businesses to understand how a simple change in site management or working practices can have lasting benefits for the surrounding wildlife while at the same time showing how this wildlife-friendly approach makes business sense.

The NB4B pilot started in April 2006, running for two years as part of the wider CBEN (Cumbria Business Environment Network) scheme in which member organisations are offered environmental management advice and support. This advice ranges from resource efficiency to recycling to energy conservation and is delivered through a network of business advisors who work with individual companies. CBEN also delivers an environmental awards scheme, helping business identify and address its environmental impact. It is through the CBEN programme advisors that the NB4B pilot was delivered.

There is a separate report already completed for the NB4B pilot and a best practice report is in preparation (September 2008).

3. Evaluation objectives

This report evaluates the findings from the Natural Benefits for Business telephone survey, which was carried out by Creative Concern in July 2008.

The objectives of the survey, as laid out in the brief were to obtain information about the Natural Benefits for Business pilot, specifically:

- Why did the business want to get involved in the NB4B pilot?
- How did the business benefit from the NB4B pilot?
- Would businesses wish to continue with the NB4B pilot, or similar?
- In hindsight, would the business have wanted to do anything differently?
- Is the CBEN award scheme an incentive for business to participate in this biodiversity project?*

* This wording deviates slightly from the original brief supplied to Creative Concern, but has been amended for this report, to clarify the difference between the wider CBEN award and the NB4B pilot.

There were 64 companies that were available to be interviewed in total. Of these, 27 participated in the survey.

4. Method

The telephone survey was selected as the tool for this piece of research as it enables us to obtain a high yield of results (a previous survey was an email survey, which had a lower uptake). Also, the telephone survey allowed participants to have instant interaction with the interviewer – any clarifications or questions can be resolved immediately, which is important for individuals who are struggling to remember the detail of the pilot.

The telephone survey was carried out in-house at Creative Concern. Each business was contacted a maximum of three times – if there was no response after three attempts, this business was not included in the survey. The survey took place over two weeks in July 2008. We allowed this period of time, to enable us to try at a range of different times of day, and different days of the week, to maximise the chance of a higher response rate. The telephone survey consisted of 14 questions in total. The questions' format was varied, including open answers, closed 'selected' answers, graded (1-5) and yes / no.

A single member of the team undertook all calls.

Annex one – a copy of the final questionnaire used.

5. Differentiating between CBEN's wider service and NB4B

Cumbria Business Environment Network (CBEN) offers environmental advice and support to businesses across the Cumbria area. This advice ranges from resource efficiency to recycling to energy conservation and is delivered through a network of business advisors who work with individual companies. CBEN also delivers an environmental awards scheme, helping business identify and address its environmental impact. It is through the CBEN programme advisors that the NB4B pilot was delivered.

At the beginning of this survey process, it was acknowledged that there was a chance for confusion, amongst respondents, between the wider CBEN service, and the specific NB4B pilot. This survey was designed, wherever possible for participants to understand that they were responding specifically about the NB4B pilot, rather than the wider service that CBEN offers. The wording of the questionnaire, which was treated as a script by our surveyor, including a specific reference to NB4B or biodiversity in questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 13. The opening script was also drafted to make the point of the survey very clear. This was our main safeguard for getting responses that referred specifically to the NB4B pilot.

In the evaluation of the results, every effort has been taken to disregard information that appears to be referring to the wider CBEN offering, and this is specifically referred to in the question-by-question analysis below.

6. Response rate

The 64 companies that were involved in the NB4B pilot were contacted as part of the survey. The survey yielded 27 responses. 10 companies were declared as 'declined to take part' and we were unable to contact or complete 27. This represents a 42% response rate, and the following report is based on these completed surveys.

Below is a table that details the response rate for each individual question. (The confidence interval is available for these questions, in annex five.)

Question	Response number	Percentage response	Confidence interval (with a confidence level set at 95%) The amount + or – for the extrapolated figures
One a	27	42	14.27
One b	27	42	14.27
One c	27	42	14.27
One d	27	42	14.27
One e	22	34	16.16
One f	27	42	14.27
Two	27	42	14.27
Three	27	42	14.27
Four	27	42	14.27
Five	26	41	14.68
Six	26	41	14.68
Seven	27	42	14.27
Eight	27	42	14.27
Nine a	27	42	14.27
Nine b	27	42	14.27
Nine c	27	42	14.27
Nine d	25	39	15.04
Nine e	27	42	14.27
Nine f	26	41	14.68
Nine g	27	42	14.27
Ten	27	42	14.27
Eleven	17	27	18.01
Twelve a	25	39	15.04
Twelve b	26	41	14.68
Twelve c	26	41	14.68
Twelve d	23	36	15.83
Twelve e	0	/	/
Thirteen	18	28	17.72
Fourteen	17	27	18.01

Note on confidence intervals:

A confidence interval gives an estimated range of values that is likely to include an unknown population parameter, the estimated range being calculated from a given set of sample data.

If independent samples are taken repeatedly from the same population, and a confidence interval calculated for each sample, then a certain percentage (confidence level) of the intervals will include the unknown population parameter.

So, for example, if the percentage responding to a question is 40%, and the confidence interval is 10%, anywhere between 30% (minus 10%) and 50% (plus 10%) of the wider population would have given that response.

Annex two – spreadsheet showing the responses to the survey

Annex three - spreadsheet showing the companies, which completed, declined or were unable to complete.

7. Sector by sector response rate

Of the 27 companies who took part in the survey:

- 17 were tourism companies = 63% of the surveyed businesses
- 4 were manufacturing = 14.8% of the surveyed businesses
- 2 were retail = 7.4% of the surveyed businesses
- 3 were 'other' = 11.1% of the surveyed businesses
- 1 was service = 3.7% of the surveyed businesses

It must be noted that as the sector analysis cannot be extrapolated as a representative sample of the population, it is of limited value to this report. Therefore, future pilots of the NB4B scheme should consider this and seek to find a better representation across the different sectors, to strengthen the overall evaluation of the NB4B pilot.

8. Report on findings (in question order)

Question one

(All 27 companies responded to five out of six parts of this question with a 42% return. Question one e received 22 responses representing a 34% return, therefore results for this question should be read with consideration of this.)

This question was designed to ascertain the motivation of the participants to take up the offer of the biodiversity advice from CBEN. It was a graded response question, offering interviewees a choice of 1 to 5, where one is very important to the decision, and 5 is of no relevance or importance.

As part of your work with CBEN's advisors, you received some specific advice about how your business can help local biodiversity.

This advice was designed to help you to make small changes that could dramatically help local wildlife, with added business benefits.

We'd like to know why you made the decision to take part in the Natural Benefits for Business pilot to receive specific advice on biodiversity?

Please rate the importance of the following statements, with one being extremely important to your decision, two being quite important, three being of limited importance in some cases, four of very low importance and five being of no importance at all:

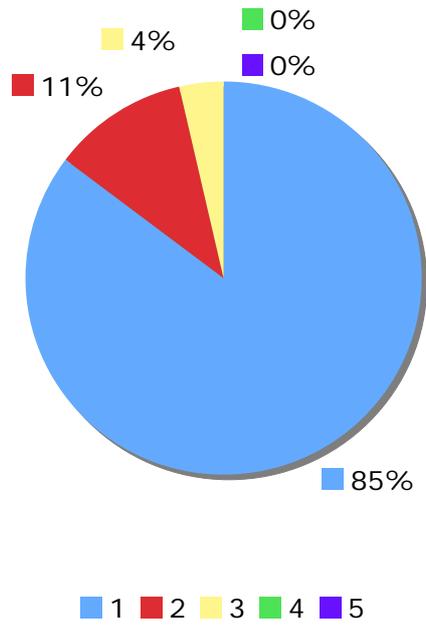
- a. The business case that was made for taking part***
- b. We thought that it would help us to deliver our corporate social responsibility commitment***
- c. We believed it would be good PR / publicity for us***
- d. We believed that it would be good for the morale of our staff to be involved in a pilot like this***
- e. We were asked to take part by our landlords / similar***
- f. We wanted to win a CBEN award and this would help***

The results have been analysed in terms of the fundamental reason for taking part in the NB4B pilot. Following this, the most highly valued reason for taking part in the pilot was the business case for being involved; 85% of businesses thought this was extremely important. It should be noted that no definition was given to what 'business case' referred to, and each business will have determined the meaning themselves. 78% of businesses stated that the assistance to deliver CSR commitment was extremely important, and 59% stated the chance to win a CBEN award was an extremely important.

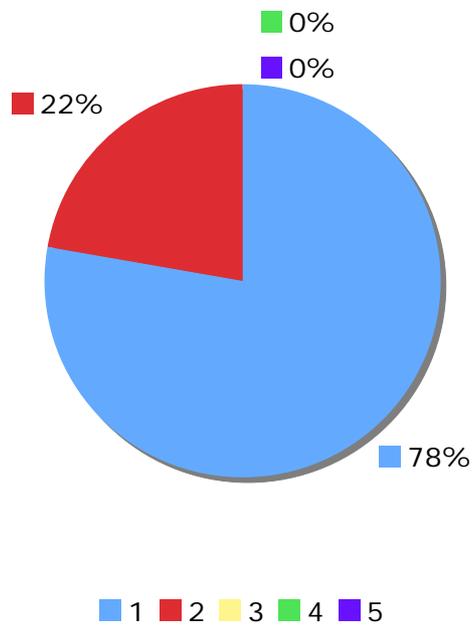
Landlord obligation (or similar) rated as much less important – 70% of the businesses said this was of very little or no importance.

Given the wording of the question, and the preceding opening script, and the clarity of the questions, it can be assumed that these responses are about NB4B specifically.

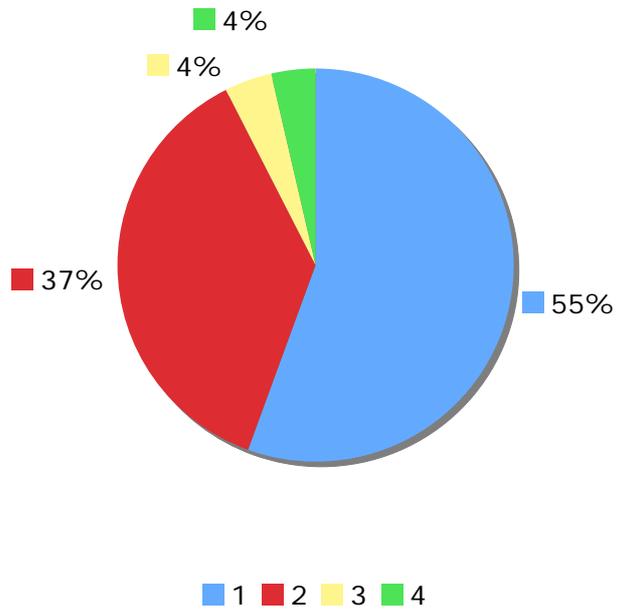
Motivations - the business case that was made for taking part



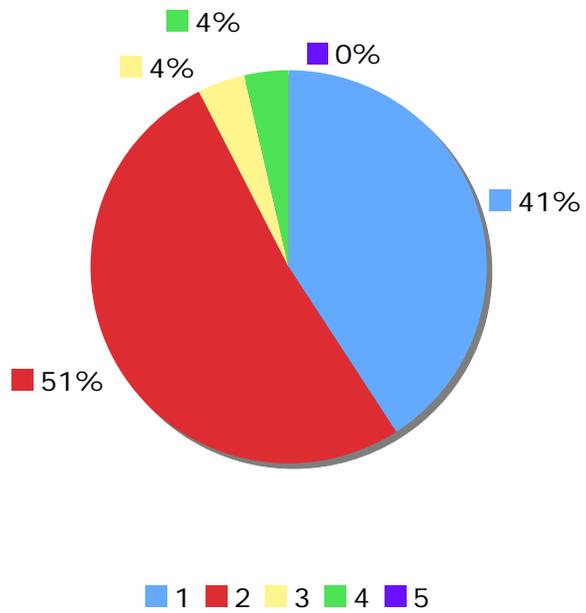
Motivations - helping to deliver the corporate social responsibility obligations



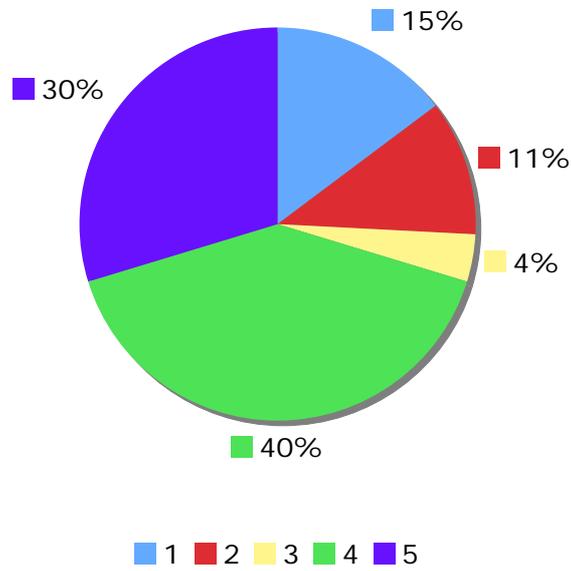
Motivations - good PR / publicity opportunity for the company



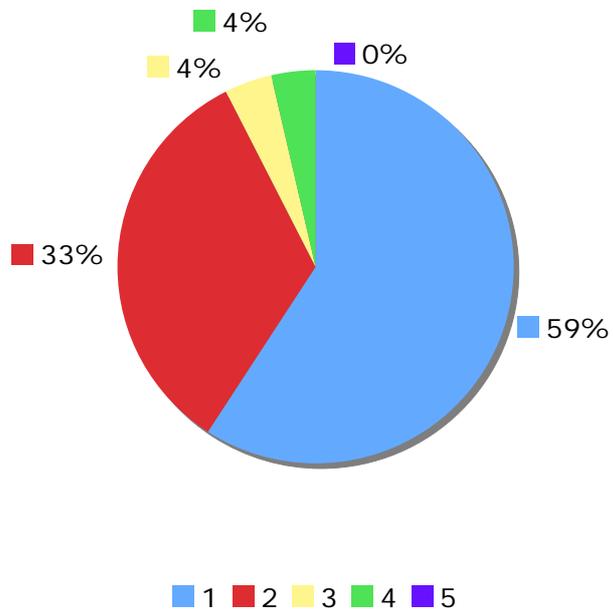
Motivations - a good morale booster for staff



Motivations - asked to take part by landlord or similar



Motivations - the chance of winning a CBEN award



Question two

(All 27 companies responded to this question. However, eight responses have to be discounted for providing answers that demonstrated confusion with the wider CBEN scheme. This means that a total of 19 companies are considered in this question's results representing a 30% return. Therefore results for this question should be read with consideration of this.)

This question was designed to explore any personal reasons for receiving the biodiversity advice. It was an open question, which invited free speech.

Was there any other reason why you wanted to receive this specific biodiversity advice? (Please state)

The full set of responses to this question can be found in **annex one**.

Whilst the responses to this question were fairly diverse, they also broke into three clear groups:

1.

The CBEN link – six businesses (22% of respondents) took up this advice because they already trusted and acknowledged CBEN's reputation. This indicates a preference for advice being delivered through an existing, trusted wider business support provider.

"My husband had started working with CBEN on his farm and thought it would be a good idea to extend this to the Bed and Breakfast - as we wanted the whole business to go greener."

"We had been told about CBEN by another business and wanted to get involved to make a difference and gain some advice."

2.

The 'altruists' response – a number of people stated altruistic reasons for taking part, whether to help the local community, or the wider natural environment. Seven businesses (26%) specifically stated that they wanted to be involved in the NB4B pilot for mainly altruistic reasons, but a further six (22%) suggested that they had a general desire to 'go greener', or transfer their personal environmental beliefs to their business.

"Because we are a school we are very aware of the social effects of having a good environment and giving something back so we wanted to get some advice on how to deliver on a wider level."

"Because of the way the world is going we felt that we needed to do something to help. Having young grandchildren makes us feel the need to make the world more environmentally friendly."

"It was a case of just wanting to do our bit and help the UK"

3.

Specific advice – 14 companies (51% of the surveyed total) referenced a desire to receive advice as a reason why they took part in the pilot. However, eight of these have been disregarded from this evaluation, as they cite aspects of the wider CBEN programme, rather than the specific NB4B pilot. So a total of 22% of businesses can be viewed as responding that gaining new advice was a driver to them taking part in NB4B.

Question three

(All 27 companies responded to this question, although one business responded with an answer of “I don’t know”, so the total response rate is considered to be 41%)

This question was intended to assess the perceived stand-alone value of the NB4B pilot and to ascertain if this would be something worth pursuing in the future. It was a yes/no question, with free speech encouraged.

You received the advice about improving your local biodiversity as part of the wider package of business advice offer by CBEN.

Would you have been interested in getting this biodiversity advice if it hadn’t been part of a wider CBEN scheme – i.e. if it had been a stand-alone scheme?

- a. Yes (please state why)***
- b. No (please state why)***

20 businesses responded ‘yes’, that they would have still been interested in taking part in the pilot, even if it weren’t part of the CBEN scheme. Six businesses responded ‘no’ they would only have taken part if it were part of CBEN. One business responded that they didn’t know. All businesses expanded on their reasoning. Eleven companies who responded yes then went on to qualify their answer by saying that they still placed a high value on CBEN being the delivery agent, as they had a good reputation and / or had been recommended. Nine of the companies that responded yes stated that they would have received the information from any company, without expressing any specific loyalty to CBEN.

This indicates that only a third of the companies in total would have been completely receptive to receiving biodiversity advice from any other company – two thirds would either have only received the information if it came from CBEN, or stated loyalty to CBEN, even though they would consider other suppliers.

“No- I just wanted to work with CBEN as my husband already had and he was impressed with the work that was done.”

“CBEN is more suited and recognised to the area we work in.”

“Yes I would have [taken advice from elsewhere] - we were asked to take part by CBEN but we would have been happy to take advice from a stand alone company.”

“Yeah, I would have been interested but CBEN had been spoken about in the local area and recommended.”

Two businesses reiterated the importance of the CBEN award.

Given that the question referred specifically to the biodiversity advice twice, and the questioner was prompted to respond accordingly we are confident that responses can be read as being specifically about the NB4B pilot advice.

Question four

(All 27 companies responded to this question, representing a 42% return)

This question was designed to explore the reasoning behind the companies’ selection of individual modules, and to ascertain if there would be value in focusing on specific modules in future schemes. It was a free speech question, prompted with the module titles.

There were six themed areas of the Natural Benefits for Business pilot, and your company was invited to get involved in one or more of them.

These were; Homes and Food, Go organic, Plant Butterfly Gardens, Plant Hedgerows, Plant Trees, Plant Wildflower Meadows.

Of the themed areas that were made available, why did your company choose the areas that it did?

Eight businesses fully expanded on why they chose specific modules, giving answers that ranged from them choosing things that linked to work that they were already doing, activities that they felt the school children would be best suited to, those that they thought looked most interesting, those that linked to existing staff behaviour, and those that suited the physical space that the company had to work within. The most popular response that was given was that they were the ones that seemed most appropriate for the business or of most interest.

The majority of businesses could not give a very expanded reason for choosing the modules that they did, which implies that the modules factor less importantly in the decision making process of the businesses that take part.

As this question was specifically about the elements of the NB4B pilot, we are confident that responses were directly about NB4B.

Question five

(26 companies responded to this question. However, six responses have to be discounted for providing answers that are not relevant to the NB4B pilot. This means that a total of 20 companies are considered in this question's results, representing a 31% return. Therefore results for this question should be read with consideration of this.)

This question was intended to obtain information about some of the biodiversity gains achieved through the pilot. It was an open answer question.

To help us to quantify some of the changes that your work delivered, we'd like to know some detail about the work that you have achieved. Can you give me a brief outline of what you did as part of this pilot?

This question was seeking some anecdotal evidence of the work that had been carried out as part of the pilot, and the potential biodiversity gains that have been achieved.

There was a range of responses to this question – some businesses were able to give full, detailed responses to this question, and some gave wider outlines of their activity. One respondent was able to say that they had planted 800 metres of mixed hedgerow, 600 willow trees, installed four bird boxes and created one wildflower meadows. Another planted two fruit trees, and one has created two wildflower meadows.

All other businesses responded with more general comments, all of which are captured in **annex one**.

“We planted mixed hedgerows (80 metres along the front) and 600 willow trees. We’ve made four bird boxes and planted a flower meadow. We’ve also dug out a area for plants to attract bees.”

“We have also planted a butterfly garden in the back and hedgerows in the field.”

“We have put up bird boxes and animal hotels.”

All respondents were keen to talk about this area of the survey, and were extremely animated in their discussion. However, six responses have been disregarded by this evaluation, due to the fact that they only referenced activity that was part of the wider CBEN support, rather than specifically the NB4B pilot. A further eight businesses responded with mixed answers, which included some biodiversity information, and also some none biodiversity information. These responses have been counted. This mixture of responses does suggest that even when they were very specifically asked to respond on biodiversity, businesses still blurred the lined between the information that they received as part of the wider support package, and that which they received through NB4B. This may be due to the way that the advice was provided (no clear distinction may have been made at the time). However, it appears that several businesses (at least 14 known through their responses, which is 51% of those questioned) find it hard to distinguish between the CBEN and NB4B advice.

Question six

(26 companies responded to this question, representing a 41% return).

This question was intended to inform future schemes, to better target advice and information. This was a closed, selective question.

After receiving the advice, how did you action the changes internally within your company?

- a. You made one person or a small group champions of the project, and they drove the delivery***
- b. You passed on the information through team meetings or similar full staff communication routes, and made everyone custodians of the scheme***
- c. A member of the senior management team led on the project***
- d. Other – please state***

52% of respondents stated that a member of the senior management team led the project, with 36% of businesses stating that one person, or a small group of champions drove delivery. Only 8% delivered through a ‘full team’ approach. This clearly indicates the most appropriate way for businesses to receive future communications – targeted to senior staff, and tailored so that one person can lead on it as a project. One business was unknown.

However, it should be noted that these results might have been affected by the fact that a large proportion of these businesses were SMEs – so they potentially wouldn’t have a structure large enough to appoint a specific team to this. This should be considered if the scheme is to be targeted at larger companies.

Question seven

(All 27 companies responded to this question. However, one response has been disregarded as the respondent gave a answer of ‘yes and no’, so this represents a 41% return.)

This was a question to assess the quantity and satisfaction of follow up support, to inform future schemes. It was a closed, yes/no question.

Following the initial advice, did you feel that you received adequate follow up communication specifically about your biodiversity projects, from the CBEN advisor?

- a. Yes**
- b. No**

99% of businesses responded yes to this question – demonstrating high levels of satisfaction with the support and follow up that was offered.

Question eight

(27 companies responded to this question, which is a 42% rate of response.)

This question asked participants to give details of how they received their follow up support. It was a closed selective question.

What form did this follow up communication take?

- a. Via email communication initiated by the CBEN advisor**
- b. Via email communication initiated by yourselves**
- c. Via a follow up site visit by the CBEN advisor**
- d. Other (please state)**

The results showed that 11 businesses stated that follow up took all different forms. Three received only email contact, and 13 companies had face to face follow up communication (answer C). Anecdotal responses demonstrated that support was considered very good quality and consistent.

“All method of communication have been used, including regular visits, and our adviser was always just on the other end of the phone.”

“A, B and C. We have visits from the advisers every couple of months and we are also in touch for updates on the phone and via email.”

“All –we were very impressed with all the feedback and communication from CBEN.”

“We had face to face visits every now and again, but we knew that the advisers always available if more information was needed.”

Question nine

(All 27 companies responded to five out of seven parts of this question (a, b, c, e and g) representing a 42% return. Section d has a 39% return (25 businesses), and section f a 41% return (26 businesses).

This question was designed to ascertain how the companies felt that they had benefited from the pilot, to inform promotion of future schemes (to highlight the most beneficial elements). It was a graded question, 1-5.

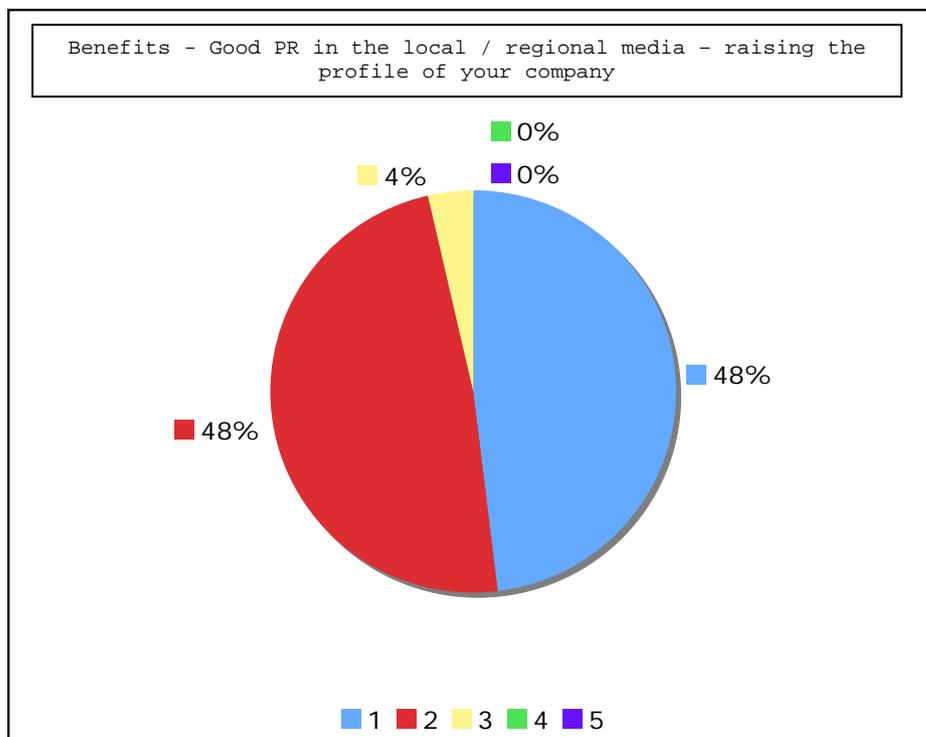
To clarify, question one in the survey seeks to understand what would make someone sign up for a pilot like NB4B – the perceived, or expected future benefits. This question seeks to understand how the companies actually feel that they have benefited after they have completed the NB4B pilot.

The Natural Benefits for Business scheme suggested that you could benefit in a number of ways from receiving biodiversity advice.

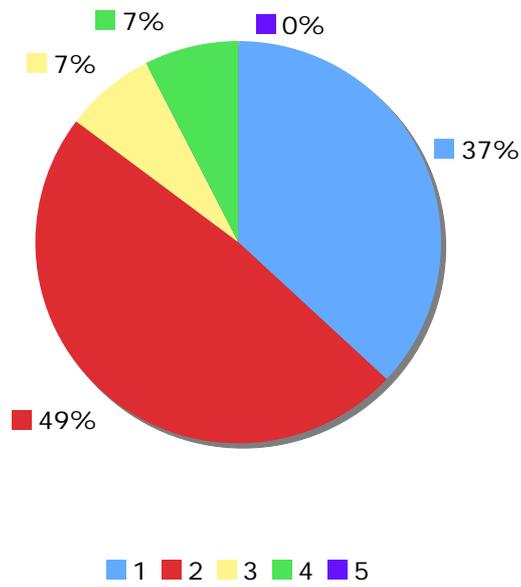
Please rate the following statements, in terms of how much you feel your company benefited, with one being very much so, and five being not at all:

- a. Good PR in the local / regional media – raising the profile of your company**
- b. An improvement in staff morale**
- c. An improvement in existing customer perceptions of your business (demonstrated through customer surveys or similar)**
- d. An increase in new business / customers**
- e. Networking and business development opportunities with likeminded companies**
- f. An improved chance of being eligible for other grant support etc from other sources**
- g. A significant change in behaviour in staff, making it easier to implement other environmental improvements within the business**

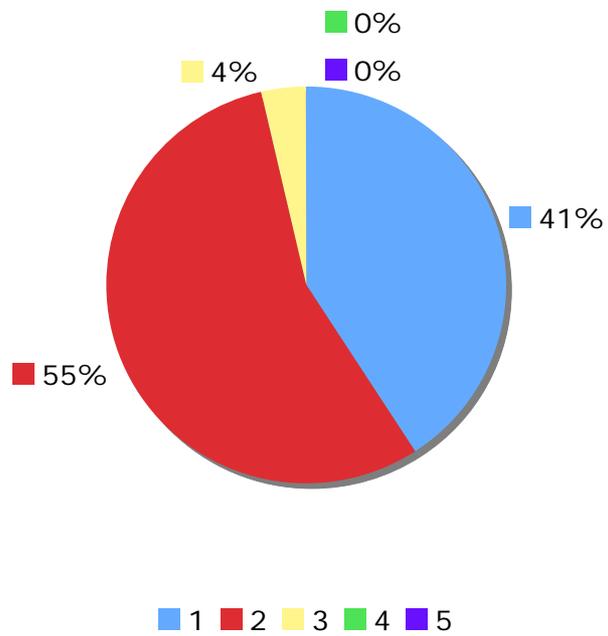
The results of this question demonstrate that in terms of the most valued factor, the opportunity to raise the profile of the business was considered to be the most significant benefit – with 96% rating this very highly, or highly. Unsurprisingly, this also impacted in customer perceptions – also a 96% return of very highly, or highly. 48% of businesses felt that they benefited highly from an increase in customers / business – which is a high response for a pilot that wasn't specifically designed to increase turn over. There were no areas in which a business felt that they were of no benefit at all. The question specifically references the Natural Benefits for Business pilot, to help ensure that responses are specifically about the biodiversity advice, rather than the wider CBEN package. Given the wording of the question, it can be assumed that these responses are about NB4B specifically, and therefore we are confident that they are an accurate reflection of the NB4B pilot.



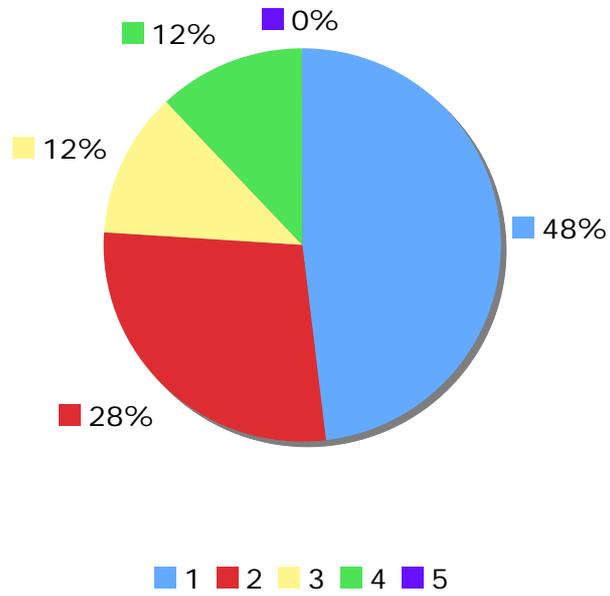
Benefits - an improvement in staff morale



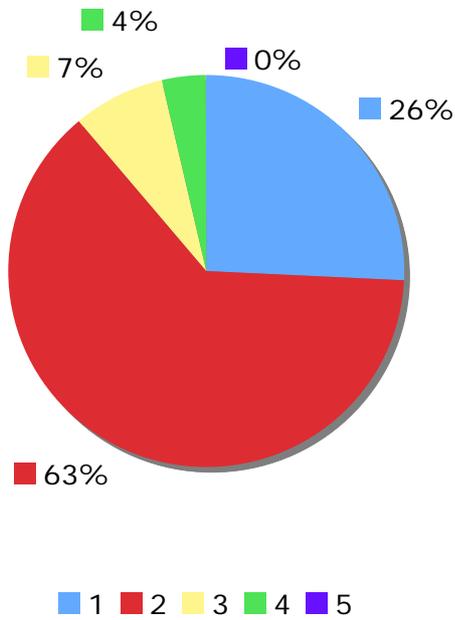
Benefits - an improvement in customer perceptions (demonstrated through customer surveys and similar)



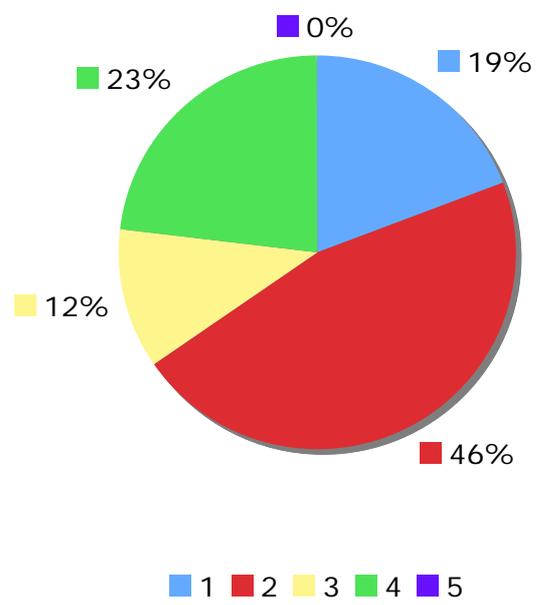
Benefits - An increase in new business and customers



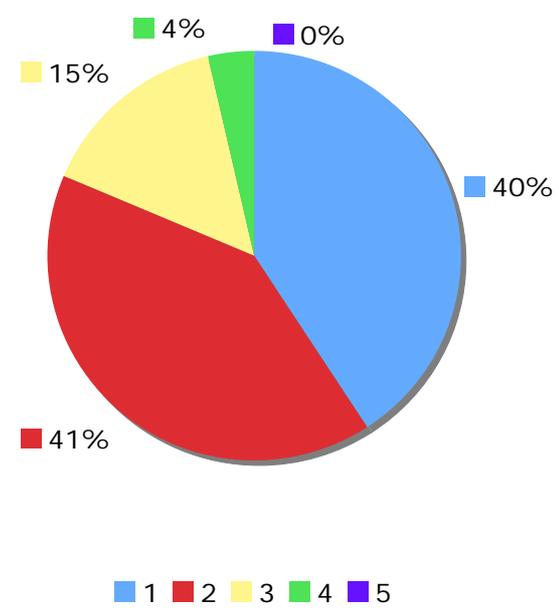
Benefits - networking and business development opportunities



Benefits - an improved chance of being eligible for other grants or funding from other sources



Benefits - a significant change in the behaviour of staff, making it easier to implement other environmental improvements



Question ten

(All 27 companies responded to this question, representing a 42% return. However, only 12 responses have been considered valid in this report (other responses were mixed with wider CBEN information), so this represents a lower return of 19%)

This question expanded on the previous question.

Was there any other way that you feel your company benefited? (Please state)

The responses to this question need to be read very carefully.

Four businesses stated biodiversity in their answers, making it very clear that for these respondents, they understood that this question was specifically about the NB4B pilot, and felt that biodiversity improvements had enhanced their business:

“We have had the knowledge to go it alone as such and make changes to the business to help us excel in the biodiversity area.”

Two of these four businesses did state biodiversity, but also stated other, none biodiversity benefits. However, for the purposes of this evaluation, these answers have been categorised as above.

A further 8 businesses gave responses where it is not possible to ascertain whether or not they are responding specifically about biodiversity, but their responses did not give any reason to believe that they were not, for example:

“We have all become more aware of the whole environment and how we can do our bit as a business to improve things.”

13 businesses have responded to this question stating benefits that have been classified, for the purposes of this evaluation, as none biodiversity benefits. This judgement has been made working with a representative of the NB4B pilot (Gareth Richards, NENW), and specifically discounts answers that only talk about:

- saving money
- legal information
- saving energy

This judgement has been made because the three factors stated above are not considered to be relevant to the NB4B pilot. Therefore, these responses cannot be considered in this evaluation.

This may have occurred due to the survey question not specifically referencing NB4B or biodiversity.

Of the valid answers, the key areas of additional benefits are increased knowledge and awareness of the key issues relating to biodiversity.

However, due to the low return rate of valid answers, this question cannot be considered valuable as part of the wider evaluation.

Two businesses said that they couldn't think of any further benefits.

Question eleven

(The response rate to this question was 26%, with 17 companies responding).

This question aimed to find out if businesses felt that the biodiversity advice offered added value to the wider business advice that they were receiving from CBEN. This was a question to inform the future construction of business advice schemes, which the NB4B advice could become part of.

NB: This question was re-worded for 17 of the 27 surveys, as we had very poor response rate and understanding of the original draft. The part of the question that was causing confusion was the term 'added value' which was considered too much like jargon. This was changed to the question below, about whether people would find a programme more attractive or less attractive with biodiversity elements included. The question wording also includes the term module, but this was understood, as it followed on from the question above, which had defined the term module in this context.

You received this biodiversity advice as part of a wider package of business advice from CBEN. Do you think that having the chance to receive advice about biodiversity as part of a general business advice scheme makes it more attractive – i.e. would you be more likely to sign up for a package of business advice if it included a biodiversity module?

- a. yes**
- b. no**

One business responded that they would not be more likely and 16 businesses stated that they would be more likely to sign up to a package of advice if it included this kind of advice. These responses indicate that businesses consider the addition of biodiversity advice can make a more general business environment advice scheme more attractive – and therefore add value to a programme of wider business advice. Although a very positive response, as the response rate to this question was only 26%, this result has to be read with some caution.

Question twelve

(Part a of this question represents a 39% response rate (25 companies), b – 41% (26 companies), c – 41% (26 companies), d – 36% (23 companies). There were no responses to part e.)

This question explored how the pilot could have been improved. It was a prompted, open answer-style question.

Following your involvement in the scheme, are there any ways that you would improve the service that you received, in the areas of:

- a. Advertising of the scheme / finding out about the scheme in the first place**
- b. The level and quality of knowledge and advice offered by the CBEN advisers**
- c. The level and quality of follow up support**
- d. The areas of advice offered through the scheme (for example, were they relevant to you, did you want advice on areas not covered etc)**
- e. Other (please state)**

Part a:

19 businesses said specifically they thought the quality of advertising was very good. In particular, the fact that the information was all very relevant and they weren't bombarded with irrelevant information was focused on by a number of businesses.

“The advertising was very good, and I liked the way that they didn’t send too much and often they preferred to do their ‘promoting’ face to face.”

“Advertising was quirky and eye catching and it seemed to do the job.”

Two businesses made no comments or had no opinion, and five businesses actually felt that the advertising wasn’t as strong as it could have been, although the thrust of these responses was that they had either not seen any, or one respondent, who disliked the paper-based format of the advertising (for environmental reasons).

Part b:

26 of the 27 respondents said that they thought the level and quality of advice was excellent or good. Comments focused on the diverse range of information that the advisors seemed to have at their fingertips and several people specifically said that there wasn’t a question that the advisors were unable to answer. One business was unhappy with the level of advice, feeling that it was too basic for their needs. This respondent was from the tourism sector, which otherwise scored well in terms of level of support of knowledge and advice. This negative response may have been the result of an extremely well informed individual within the business, who had a higher than expected level of personal knowledge (earlier in the questionnaire, this respondent had stated that their business had already done a lot of work in the area of biodiversity). In the earlier question about the level of follow-up advice (question seven), this respondent also stated that they were only happy with parts of the support, which backs up this conclusion.

“Their knowledge was excellent, and the advisor could answer everything that was asked.”

“The level and quality of advisors was excellent.”

“I felt that [the information] was a basic level, and we already had that knowledge.”

Part c:

100% of businesses commended the pilot for its excellent support package. Comments focused on the regular contact / offer of support at any time through telephone contact, and also the feeling that the advisors became part of the businesses own team.

“[Support was] excellent; advisors are all on the end of the telephone, and happy to help.”

“The quality of support was outstanding, we have formed a bond with our advisor and we now work together, business to business.”

“We have become like a team with CBEN.”

One business stated that support was good, but they would have liked more.

Part d:

20 businesses stated that all the information was relevant, and fitted with their business well. Two companies did mention that although they received all the information that they needed, due to the nature of their business, some was irrelevant – but this wasn’t off-putting. This appears to have been because of the strong and open relationship between the business and the advisor.

The remaining businesses were not able to answer the question.

“We only got advice on the areas that was relevant to us, and we didn’t have to sit through information that was irrelevant to us.”

“Generally all the information was adapted for our business, but even if it hadn’t have been, I felt at ease to tell the advisor, and I know that they would have just skipped over it.”

Part e:

There were no other comments given.

In terms of distinguishing whether applicants were talking about the wider CBEN scheme, or specifically about NB4B pilot – no response gave us any reason to discount it, although given the level of confusion in question 10, and the fact that NB4B or biodiversity wasn’t specifically mentioned in the wording of question 12, these responses should be read with some caution.

Question thirteen

(The response rate to this question was 27% (17 companies). The response rate to this question and the subsequent question was lower, as a number of surveys were ended by the participants before the end.)

This question aimed to obtain recommendation rates.

Have you recommended the scheme to another company or colleagues?

64% of businesses that responded (27% of the total) stated that they had recommended the scheme to other companies or colleagues. One business had stated that they had made recommendations at the CBEN presentation dinners, as well as to other companies working in the Lake District area.

33% of businesses have not recommended the service, but one stated that this was because they hadn’t had the opportunity, and would if it arose.

Question fourteen

(27% of businesses responded to this question (17 companies))

This question aimed to find out who would be interested in continuing with this scheme. It was a closed, yes/no question.

Would you be interested in continuing your involvement with a similar biodiversity for business action scheme?

100% of businesses that answered this question, or 26% of the total, stated that they would be interested in continuing their involvement, in some way.

9. Summary of findings

The following section highlights the main findings from the evaluation, and also provides some recommendations for the scheme going forward.

Key findings

1. Motivation for involvement

The most important factor for businesses getting involved is the 'business case' that was made for taking part. Anecdotal information given through the survey suggests that individuals within businesses do place some value on the more altruistic elements of receiving and acting on biodiversity advice. This factor appears to be driven by the individuals responding to the survey.

2.

Benefits of participation

The main benefit felt by those who took part was the opportunity to raise the profile of the business, and in turn improve customer reputation. For many businesses, this even translated into an increase in business or customers. The impact on staff was also noted as a close second in terms of value – staff morale was a highly recognised benefit, whilst a positive change in staff behaviour was also acknowledged.

The chance to network, or to obtain follow on advice was recognised as less of a benefit. However, some of the anecdotal responses suggested that recommendation levels for the pilot were high and that several companies were actually cited the ability to spread the advice and help other businesses as being an important driver for them.

3.

Long-term satisfaction and appeal of the pilot

Over all, satisfaction with the pilot was high. 99% of businesses responded that they were satisfied with the quality and quantity of the following up communication, and it appeared that the relationships with the advisors themselves seems to have been a major contributor to this. In addition, 26 of 27 respondents stated that they thought the quality of advice was excellent or good, and 20 businesses stated that all information was relevant. Of the 17 companies who answered a question about the 'added value' of biodiversity advice to a wider business advice scheme, 16 businesses stated that they would be more likely to sign up to a package of advice if it included biodiversity information (however, as the response rate to this question was only 27%, this result has to be read with some caution). 100% of businesses who answered a question about continuing with the pilot said that they would be interested.

However, because there was clear confusion between the wider CBEN offer and the NB4B pilot, this level of satisfaction may have been influenced by the full service of CBEN.

4.

CBEN award scheme

The CBEN award is an incentive – 59% of respondents stated it was extremely important in their decision making process, and a further 33% stating it was quite important. Anecdotally, it was also stated as important – it was referred to in responses to questions two, four, five and ten.

10. Recommendations

The following section details the key recommendations of this report.

1.

Future pilots

This pilot focused very heavily on one sector – tourism – and therefore it is recommended that any future roll-out aims for a more equal balance of sectors (including manufacturing, service, retail, transport etc), so that a more thorough evaluation can be carried out on the impact and effects of these sectors.

It is also recommended that greater clarity is sought, from the beginning of the scheme as to the difference between the NB4B advice, and any wider package of environmental advice that was being offered, as there was confusion between the two with this sample, which in turn has affected the evaluation.

2.

Advertising of the NB4B scheme / maximising the appeal of the scheme's offer

Emphasising the direct business benefits of involvement in NB4B would be the most appropriate way to focus marketing of future rounds of the scheme, although care must be taken to not de-couple completely from the more altruistic elements of the scheme, which can be presented as a good way to build a company brand that suggests ethical and environmentally sound business (appealing to customers and staff).

In terms of advertising methods (as well as on going scheme communication), care should be taken to follow the sound environmental credentials of the scheme – reducing the amount the paper-based communication and a move to the on-line / virtual world.

3.

The appeal of face to face support

The relationship with the business advisor is critical to the success of the scheme, and this must be continued. Communication should be primarily with one individual with whom the business can build a relationship with. This should also inform how the scheme is advertised – emphasising the one to one nature of the support and the personal element of the scheme (rather than it being delivered through a more generic method).

4.

Maximising personal interest

One of the driving forces behind the companies who took part in this pilot was the motivation and interest of individuals – although not the primary reason for getting involved, having a very motivated or passionate individual within a company who felt strongly about sound environmental practices helped businesses to get the most out of the scheme. Therefore, NB4B should consider marketing their services to passionate individuals involved in business, through the many 'green professional networks' that exist.

5.

A NB4B network

The survey suggested that some participants would have liked to have had more opportunity to network, and use their involvement in the NB4B pilot as a way of growing their contacts and potential customer base as well as a chance to spread the word about their work with NB4B with other companies who aren't currently involved. More opportunities to link the different participating companies could enhance the overall offer to businesses.

6.

Delivery method

The findings from this survey suggest that businesses place a great deal of value of the delivery of advice through an agency or organisation that they have already heard of / dealt with in the past. It is therefore recommended that future phases of NB4B seek to team up with existing delivery agents of business advice.

7.

Sector-tailored advice and support

This current pilot did focus heavily on one sector – tourism – and therefore future rounds of NB4B should seek to offer more tailored advice to different sectors, recognising that the strength of NB4B is in the personal, and therefore more bespoke, nature of the service.

8.

Awards scheme

As the CBEN award was seen as such an incentive for this pilot scheme, it is recommended that a link to a similar awards scheme is replicated for any future phases of NB4B.

11. General comment regarding the link between CBEN and NB4B

As mentioned in an earlier chapter of this evaluation report, the survey sought to draw a clear distinction between NB4B and CBEN. The subsequent evaluation also attempted to eradicate any answers that were clearly given about the wider CBEN scheme, rather than the NB4B pilot, so that results can be viewed as purely NB4B results. However, in spite of best efforts, it must be noted that there was some confusion between the two schemes right through the survey, and this should therefore be borne in mind when the evaluation is being read.

12. General comment regarding statistical relevance

The response rate has been provided for all the questions, to aid the reader. The overall response rate was 42%, which is sufficient for the survey to be considered a good representation of the total number of businesses. However, the number drops to 28% (question 13) and 27% for two of the questions (11 and 14). In these instances, although the findings can be used to suggest very general trends, it would not be accurate to say that these questions could stand to represent all the businesses, which took part in the NB4B pilot.

13. Sector analysis

As detailed earlier in this report, the breakdown of different sectors included in this survey is as follows:

- 17 tourism companies (of 33 involved in NB4B pilot)
- 4 manufacturing companies (of 7 involved in NB4B pilot)
- 3 businesses classified as 'other' (of 11 involved in NB4B pilot)
- 2 retail companies (of 5 involved in NB4B pilot)
- 1 service company (of 5 involved in NB4B pilot)
- 0 art & design companies (of 3 involved in NB4B pilot)

A sector analysis has been hampered by the imbalance between the sectors represented in the survey. It is difficult to do a comparative survey between sectors for this reason. With such small representation, the results could be affected by a number of factors that a larger survey group would eradicate. We are unable to analyse the art & design sector at all, and the retail, service and manufacturing sectors are represented through too few surveys.

14. Annexes

Annex one – final script and questions

Question	Construction	Objective
<p>Introduction speech:</p> <p>Hello.</p> <p>I am calling on behalf of the Natural Benefits for Business scheme. Your company received some advice from us between April 2006 and December 2007 as part of a wider package of business advice from the Cumbria Business Environment Network (known as CBEN).</p> <p>You took part in a wider email survey about all the advice that CBEN gave you a couple of months ago, but I'm getting in touch to ask you a few specific questions about the Natural Benefits for Business scheme – so that's focusing on the advice about how your business can help biodiversity.</p> <p>You should have already received an email from CBEN, explaining that I would be calling.</p> <p>We would like to take 7 or 8 minutes of your time, to ask you about the biodiversity advice that you received.</p> <p>Is that ok?</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>To introduce the call, and to make the connection with CBEN (who the company will have dealt with to date).</p>
<p>If the answer to question 1. is no, the interviewer will ask to arrange a more appropriate time to call.</p> <p>If the answer to question 1. is yes:</p>		
<p><i>The original appeal of the scheme:</i></p>		
<p>Q1. As part of your work with CBEN's advisors, you received some specific advice about how your business can help local biodiversity.</p> <p>This advice was designed to help you to make small changes that could dramatically help local wildlife, with added business benefits.</p> <p>We'd like to know why you made the decision to take part in the Natural</p>	<p>(To assist the interviewer if the participant needs more help):</p> <p>1 - very important – this was fundamental to the</p>	<p>To ascertain motivation of participants.</p>

<p>Benefits for Business scheme to receive specific advice on biodiversity?</p> <p>Please rate the importance of the following statements, with 1 being extremely important or fundamental to your decision, and 4 being of no importance at all:</p> <p>A The business case that was made for taking part B We thought that it would help us to deliver our corporate social responsibility commitment C We believed it would be good PR / publicity for us D We believed that it would be good for the morale of our staff to be involved in a scheme like this E We were asked to take part by our landlords / similar F We wanted to win a CBEN award and this would help</p>	<p>decision 2 - quite important – a good secondary reason 3 - limited importance – a ‘nice to have’ but not a major reason 4 - no importance at all – not considered</p> <p>---</p> <p>Graded question</p>	
<p>Q2. Was there any other reason why you wanted to receive this specific biodiversity advice? (Please state)</p>	<p>Open answer</p>	
<p>Q3. You received the advice about improving your local biodiversity as part of the wider package of business advice offer by CBEN. Would you have been interested in getting this advice from the Natural Benefits for Business scheme if it hadn’t been part of CBEN – i.e. if it had been a stand alone scheme?</p> <p>c. Yes d. No (please state why)</p>	<p>Y/ N</p>	
<i>During the scheme:</i>		
<p>Q4. There were six themed areas of the Natural Benefits for Business scheme, and your company was invited to get involved in one or more of them. These were; Homes and Food, Go organic, Plant Butterfly Gardens, Plant Hedgerows, Plant Trees, Plant Wildflower Meadows. Your company was involved in the following areas: LIST (to be provided by CREA)</p>	<p>Open answer, prompted by previous question.</p>	<p>To ascertain the main drivers behind companies partaking in individual areas of the scheme.</p>

<p>Of the themed areas that were made available, why did your company choose the areas that it did?</p>		
<p>Q5. To help us to quantify some of the changes that your work had completed on the ground, we'd like to know some detail on the work that you have achieved.</p> <p>Can you give me a brief outline of what you did as part of this?</p>	<p>Open</p>	
<p>Q6. What form did this follow up take?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Via email communication initiated by the CREA advisor f. Via email communication initiated by ourselves g. Via a follow up site visit by the CREA advisor h. Other (please state) 	<p>Multiple choice – single answer plus open answer option</p>	<p>To ascertain level of follow up activity.</p>
<p>Q7. Did you feel that you received adequate follow up communication specifically about your biodiversity projects, from the CBEN advisor?</p>	<p>Yes / no answer</p>	<p>To ascertain presence of follow up.</p>
<p>If answer to the previous question was yes:</p>		
<p>Q8. What form did this follow up communication take?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Via email communication initiated by the CBEN advisor j. Via email communication initiated by yourselves k. Via a follow up site visit by the CBEN advisor l. Other (please state) 	<p>Multiple choice – single answer plus open answer option</p>	<p>To ascertain level of follow up activity.</p>
<p>After scheme evaluation:</p>		
<p>Q9. The Natural Benefits for Business scheme suggested that you could benefit in a number of ways from receiving biodiversity advice.</p> <p>Please rate following statements, in terms of how much you feel your</p>	<p>Graded answer</p>	<p>To ascertain the perceived benefits of participating in the scheme.</p>

<p>company benefited, with one being very much so, and four being not all:</p> <p>A Good PR in the local / regional media – raising the profile of our company</p> <p>B An improvement in staff morale</p> <p>C An improvement in existing customer perceptions of our business (demonstrated through customer surveys or similar)</p> <p>D An increase in new business / customers</p> <p>E Networking and business development opportunities with likeminded companies</p> <p>F An improved chance of being eligible for other grant support etc from other sources, due to our work in this field</p> <p>G A significant change in behaviour in staff, making it easier to implement other environmental improvements within the business</p>		
<p>Q10. Was there any other way that you feel you benefited? (Please state)</p>	<p>Open</p>	
<p>Q11. You received this biodiversity advice as part of a wider package of business advice from CBEN. Do you think that having the chance to receive advice about biodiversity as part of a general business advice scheme makes it more attractive – i.e. would you be more likely to sign up for a package of business advice if it included a biodiversity module?</p> <p>c. yes (please state why)</p> <p>d. no (please state why)</p>	<p>Y/N</p>	
<p>Q12. Following your involvement in the scheme, are there any ways that you would improve the service that you received, in the areas of:</p> <p>f. Advertising of the scheme / finding out about the scheme in the first place</p> <p>g. The level and quality of knowledge and advice offered by the CBEN advisers</p> <p>h. The level and quality of follow up support</p>	<p>Open, promoted answer</p>	<p>To encourage improvements / complaints about the scheme to be aired.</p>

<p>i. The areas of advise offered through the scheme (for example, were they relevant to you, did you want advise on areas not covered etc)</p> <p>j. Other (please state)</p>		
<p>Q13. Have you recommended the scheme to another company or colleagues?</p>	<p>Yes / no</p>	<p>To ascertain the numbers of companies who felt happy enough with the scheme to recommend it.</p>
<p>Q14. Would you be interested in continuing your involvement with a similar biodiversity for business action scheme?</p>	<p>Yes / no</p>	<p>To ascertain which companies could be approached for future similar schemes.</p>

Annex two – full spreadsheet of responses

See separate PDF (entitled Annextwo.pdf)

Annex three – spreadsheet of companies taking part and declining

See separate PDF (entitled Annexthree.pdf)