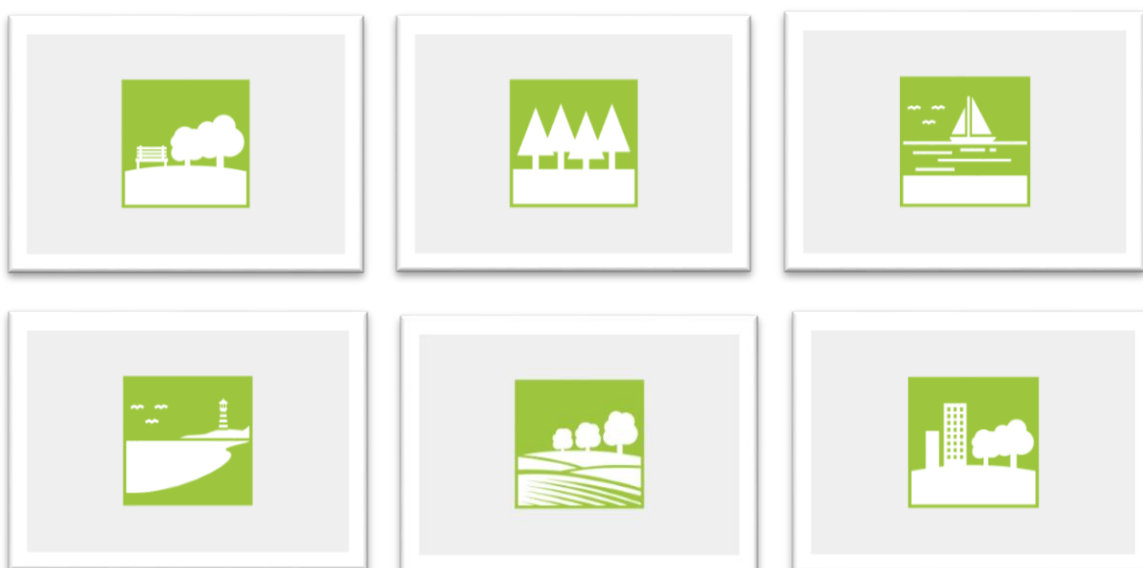


Scottish Natural Heritage

Scottish Nature Omnibus August 2019

The general public's perceptions of landscape in Scotland



Published: November 2019

People and Places
Scottish Natural Heritage
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness IV3 8NW

For further information please contact Aileen.Armstrong@nature.scot



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
nature.scot

1. Introduction

The Scottish Nature Omnibus survey is a survey of the adult population in Scotland which now runs on a biennial basis. It was first commissioned by SNH in 2009 to measure the extent to which the general public is engaged with SNH and its work. Seventeen separate waves of research have been undertaken since 2009, each one based on interviews with a representative sample of around 1,000 adults living in Scotland; interviews with a booster sample of around 100 adults from ethnic minority groups are also undertaken in each survey wave to enable us to report separately on this audience.

Since 2009 a set of questions about the public's perceptions of landscape in Scotland has been included in either the Scottish Nature Omnibus survey (SNO) or in the Scottish Opinion Survey (SOS). More recently, these questions have been included in the SNO. This paper summarises the 2019 SNO findings relating to landscape, presenting them alongside the findings from previous waves of research.

Due to differences in survey methodology, findings from the SNO are not directly comparable to findings from the SOS. In addition, please note that between 2009 and 2015 the SNO was undertaken using a face to face interview methodology. In 2017, the survey switched to an on-line interview methodology, with respondents sourced from members of the public who had agreed to be part of a survey panel. While the respondent profile and most question wording remained the same, it should be borne in mind when comparing the 2017 and 2019 findings with findings from previous years that there may be differences in behaviour between people responding to a face to face survey and those taking part in an online survey that can impact on results. For example, the presence of an interviewer in a face to face survey may result in some respondents giving what they perceive to be socially-acceptable answers; while this risk is perhaps reduced in an on-line survey, there is no interviewer present to probe respondent answers which might be difficult to interpret or to clarify survey questions which respondents may have found difficult to understand.

The report that follows highlights differences in the findings for some questions when comparing data collected pre-2017 (face to face interview methodology) with data collected subsequently (on-line interview methodology). It is difficult to determine if these differences are a result of a change in people's attitudes or are simply the result of the change in survey methodology.

2. Summary of main findings

- There has been relatively little change since 2017 in people's perceptions of Scotland's national landscapes.
- Scotland's landscapes and areas of wild land continue to be highly valued by the public: 82% of respondents in 2019 agreed that Scotland's landscapes make an important contribution to the economy and 83% agreed that the country's areas of wild land should be protected.
- Opinion remains more divided on how well Scotland's landscapes are looked after and on the impacts that new developments, such as windfarms, have had on our landscape, with a significant minority of respondents choosing to 'sit on the fence' on these subjects. There has, however, been a gradual decline over the longer-term in the proportion of respondents agreeing that our finest landscapes are well looked after; that our landscapes are changing for the better; that new developments in the countryside are having a positive impact; and that windfarms are generally well -located and designed.

- When asked to think about their immediate surroundings, 52% of respondents rated their local landscape positively (down from 57% in 2017) and a further 32% rated it 'fair'.
- When asked to think about local landscape change over the last few years, respondents were more likely to say their local landscape had got worse than better (29% versus 16%), with the greatest proportion reporting that it had stayed the same (49%).
- In line with previous waves of research, a minority of respondents (28%) said they felt well-informed about proposals which might change their local landscape in some way (e.g. proposals for housing developments, roads, paths, forestry or wind farms). Those who wanted to find out more said they would be most likely to consult their Local Authority (mentioned by 32% of respondents) or Local Authority website (8%)

3. Detailed research findings

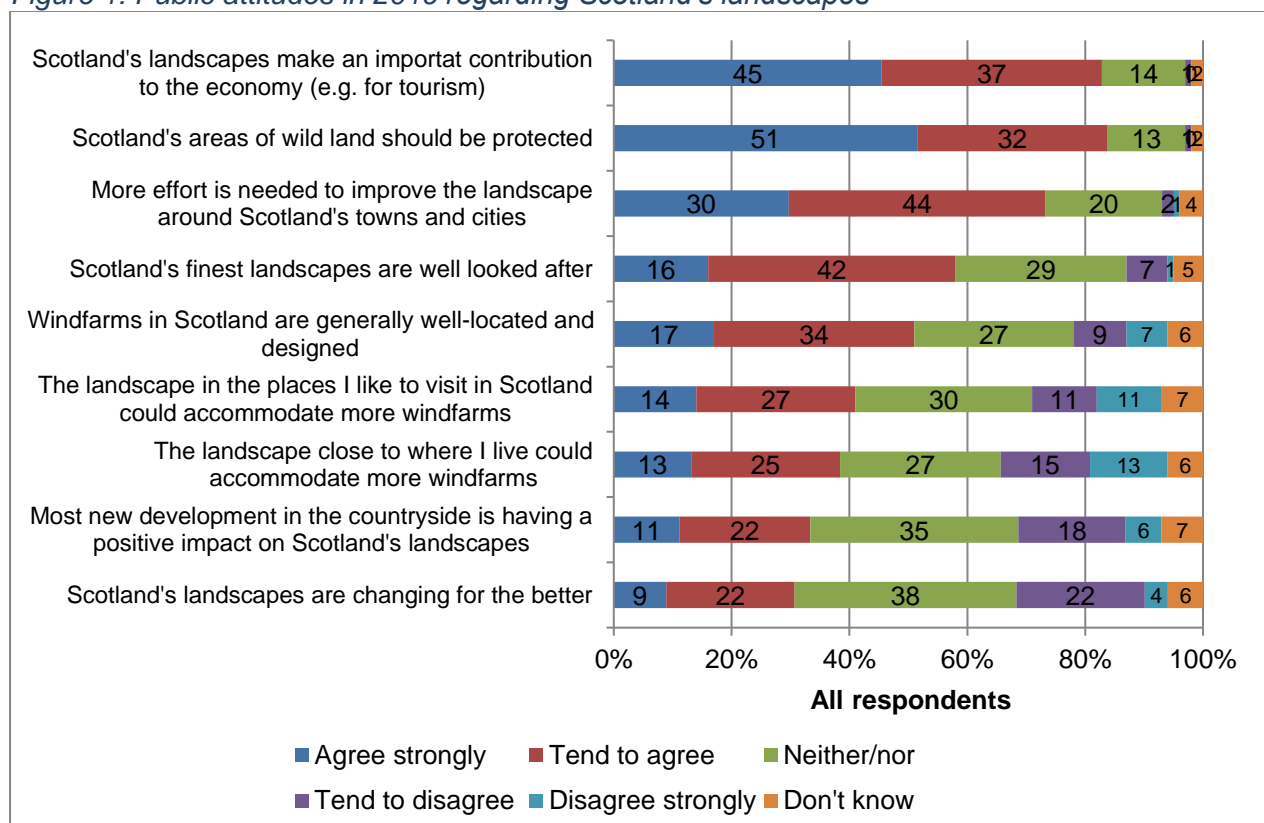
3.1 Public perceptions of Scotland's landscapes

To help us understand people's attitudes towards landscape and landscape change in Scotland, respondents were presented with a series of statements and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each one.

As shown in Figure 1, public opinion is divided on a number of landscape issues, with a significant minority of people opting to 'sit on the fence' rather than give a definite opinion either way. This division of opinion is most evident on the subject of windfarms and longer-term landscape change.

There were relatively few variations in public opinion along demographic lines, although younger people were more likely than older people to respond positively to the statements about windfarms and longer-term landscape change.

Figure 1: Public attitudes in 2019 regarding Scotland's landscapes



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19

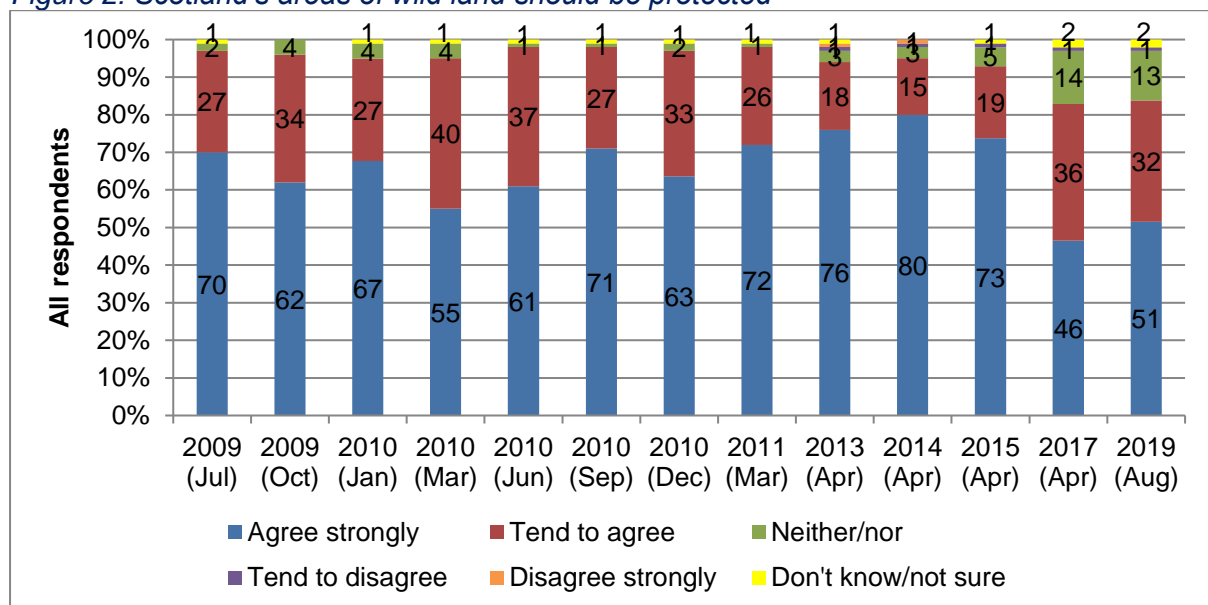
The attitude statements shown in Figure 1 were also included in some of the earlier waves of research and the following paragraphs discuss the public's level of agreement with each statement over time.

3.1.1 Valuing Scotland's landscapes

Scotland's landscapes and areas of wild land continue to be highly valued by the public. In line with previous research findings, most respondents in 2019 agreed that Scotland's areas of wild land should be protected (83%) and that the country's landscapes make an important contribution to the economy (82%).

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the overall level of agreement with these statements and the proportion of respondents who 'agree strongly' with each statement is lower in 2017 and 2019 than in previous waves of research.

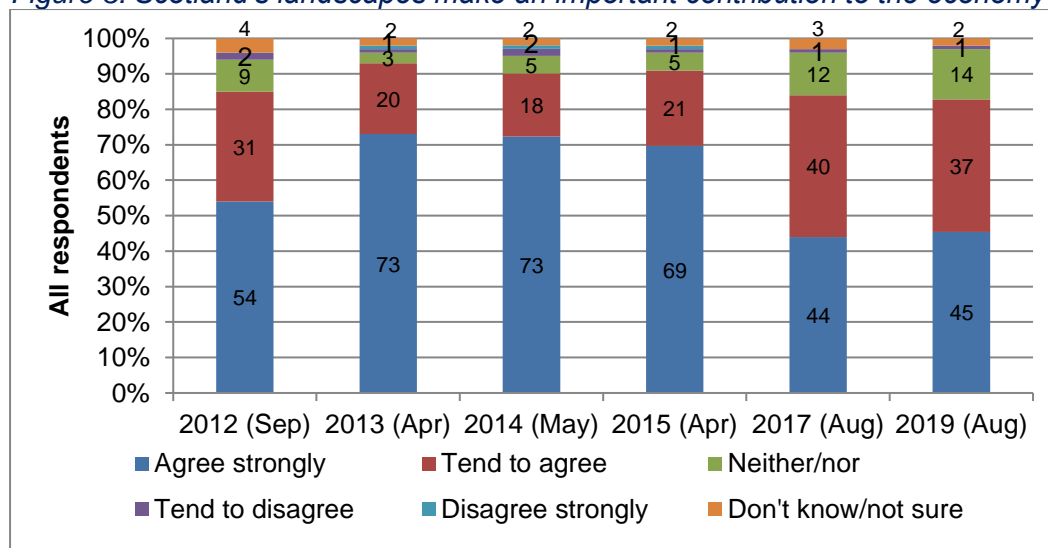
Figure 2: Scotland's areas of wild land should be protected



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2014 & 2015

NB This question wasn't asked in any survey in 2012

Figure 3: Scotland's landscapes make an important contribution to the economy



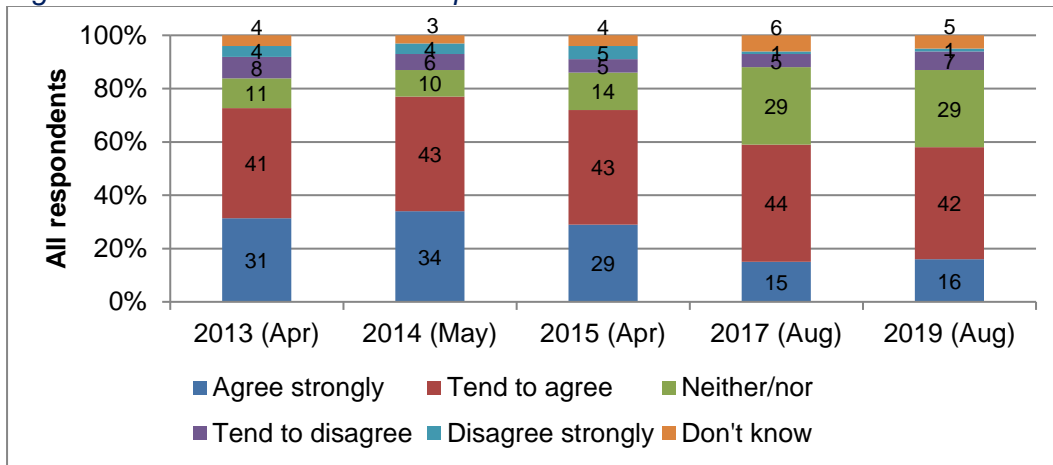
Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 9, 2012, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2014 & 2015

3.1.2 Looking after Scotland's landscapes

In 2019, many more respondents agreed than disagreed that Scotland's finest landscapes are well-looked after (58% versus 8%). A third of respondents, however, either felt unable to give an opinion on the subject (29%) or said that they didn't know (5%).

As shown in Figure 4, the proportion of respondents who agree that Scotland's finest landscapes are well looked after is lower in 2017 and 2019 than in previous waves of research. While the proportion of respondents who actually disagree with the statement remains low (at 8%), there has been an increase in the proportion of respondents who feel unable to give an opinion on the subject (29% in both 2017 and 2019).

Figure 4: Scotland's finest landscapes are well looked after

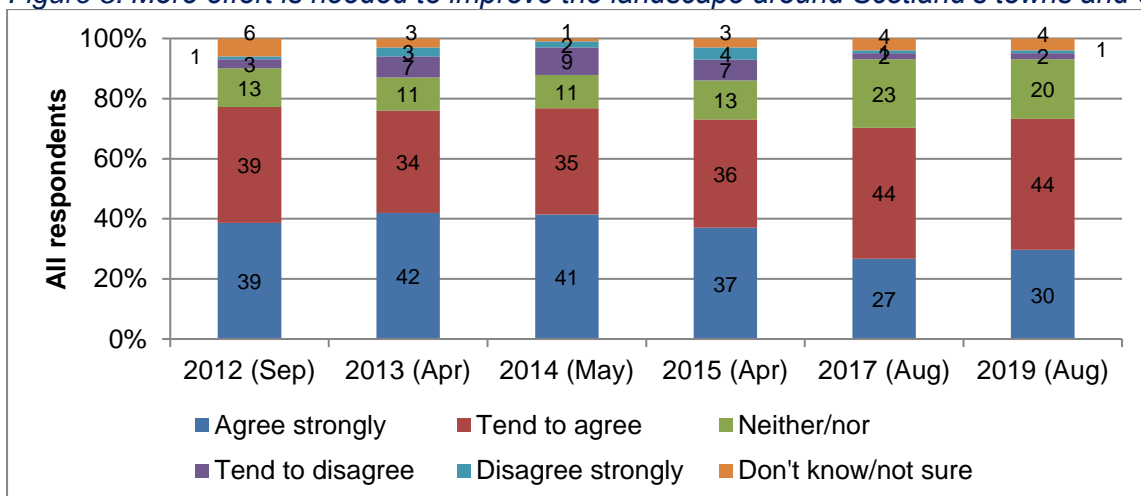


Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2015 & 2015

A majority of respondents in 2019 agreed that more effort is needed to improve the landscape around Scotland's towns and cities (73%), although fewer 'agreed strongly' in 2017 and 2019 than in earlier waves of the research. While few respondents actually disagreed with this statement (3%), around a quarter either felt unable to give an opinion (20%) or said that they didn't know (4%).

There has been relatively little change in public opinion since this question was added to the survey in 2013.

Figure 5: More effort is needed to improve the landscape around Scotland's towns and cities



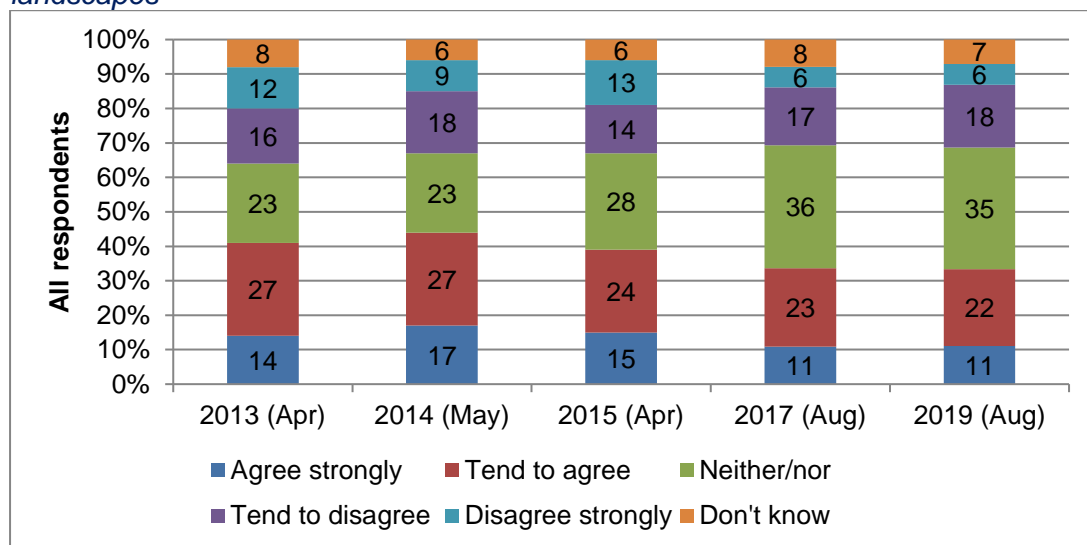
Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19, 2012, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2014, 2015

3.2 The impacts of recent landscape change

Public opinion is fairly divided on the subject of recent landscape change. As shown in Figures 6 and 7 (and in line with previous waves of research), slightly more respondents in 2019 agreed than disagreed that new development in the countryside is having a positive impact on landscapes (33% versus 24%) and that Scotland's landscapes are changing for the better (31% versus 25%). For each statement, however, more than a third of respondents felt unable to give an opinion (35% and 38%, respectively) or said that they didn't know (7% and 6%, respectively).

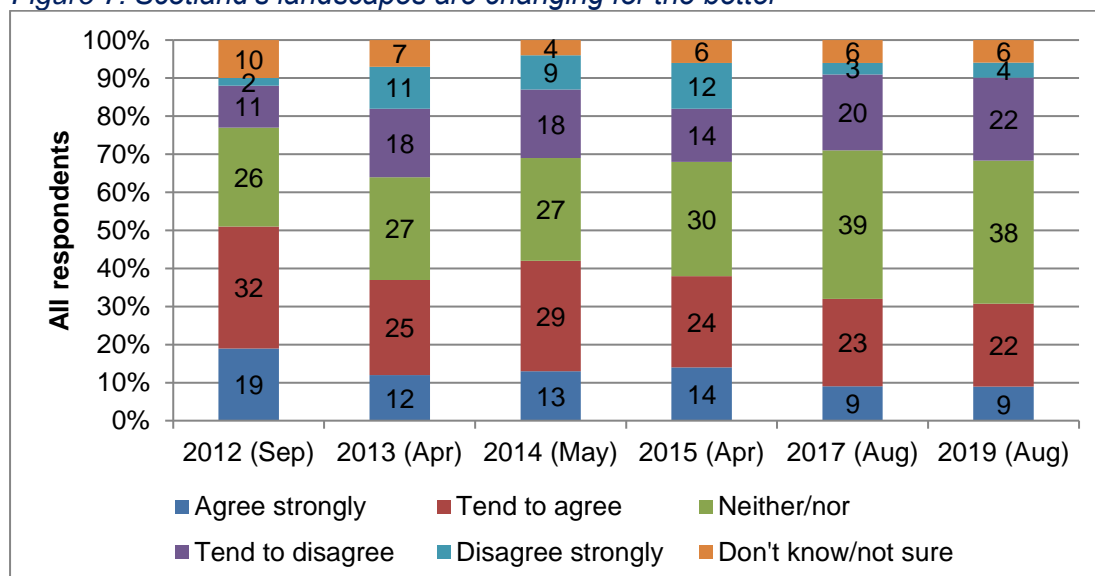
There has been a gradual decrease over time in the proportion of respondents agreeing with each of these statements and a corresponding increase in the proportions who feel unable to give an opinion.

Figure 6: Most new development in the countryside is having a positive impact on Scotland's landscapes



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2014 & 2015

Figure 7: Scotland's landscapes are changing for the better



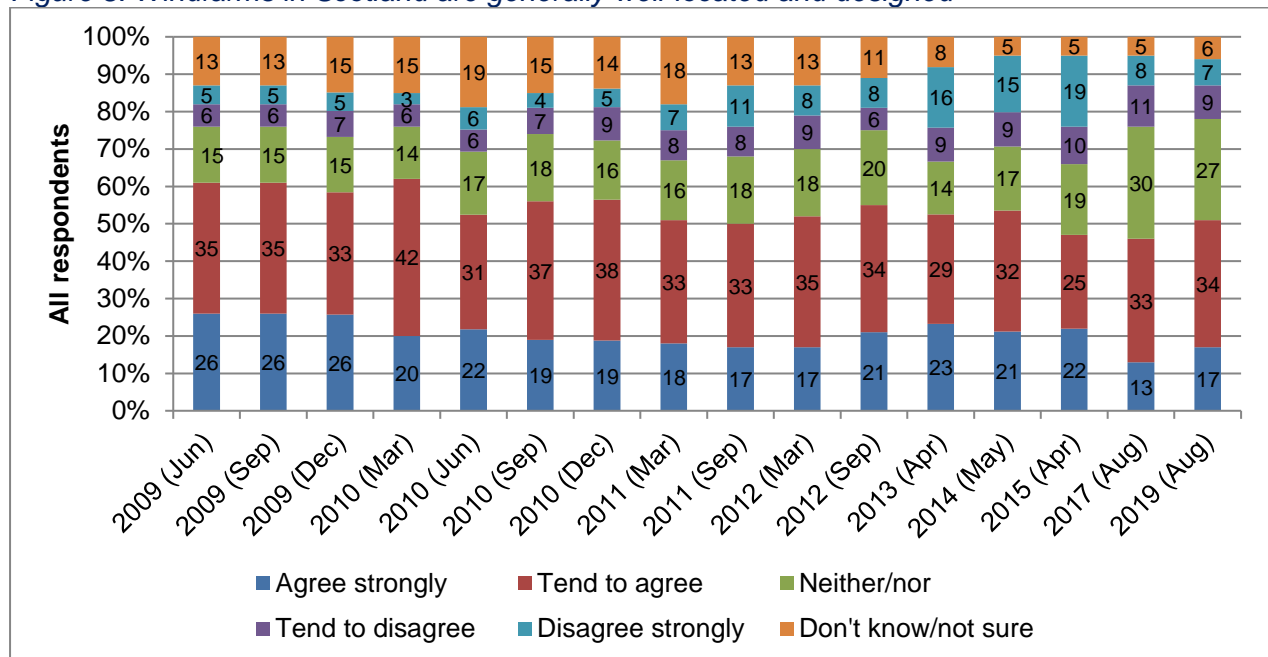
Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19, 2012, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2014 & 2015

3.3 The impact of windfarms on Scotland's landscape

At a national level, opinion remains divided on the impact that windfarms have had on the Scottish landscape. In 2019 (in line with previous waves of research), significantly more respondents agreed than disagreed that windfarms in Scotland are generally well-located and designed (51% versus 16%), but around a third of respondents felt unable to give an opinion (27%) or said that they didn't know (6%).

The proportion of respondents who agree that windfarms in Scotland are generally well-located and designed has declined gradually over time, from around 60% of respondents in 2009/2010 to around half in more recent survey waves (51% in 2019). Over time there has been a small increase in the proportion of respondents who disagree and a larger increase in the proportion who feel unable to give an opinion.

Figure 8: Windfarms in Scotland are generally well-located and designed



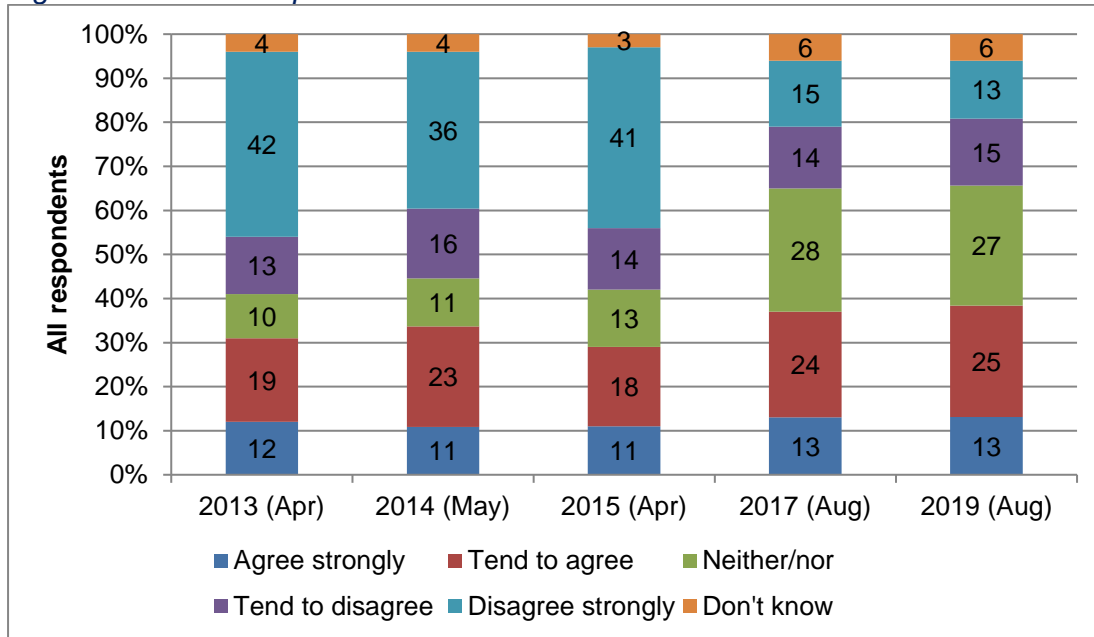
Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2014 & 2015

Public opinion is also divided on the capacity of the Scottish landscape to absorb further wind farm development.

In 2019, respondents were more likely to agree than disagree that Scotland's landscapes could accommodate more windfarm development, either close to where they live (38% versus 28%) or in the places they like to visit (41% versus 22%). However, around a third of respondents in each case felt unable to give an opinion on the subject (27% and 30%, respectively) or said they didn't know (6% and 7%, respectively).

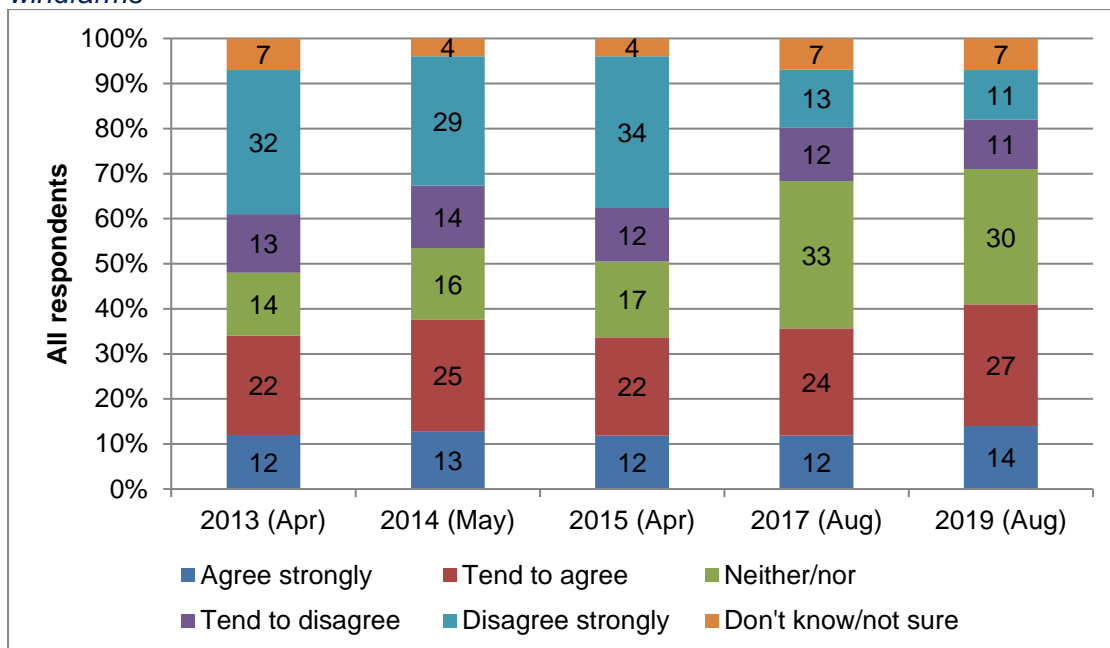
As shown in Figures 9 and 10, the proportion of respondents who agree that the Scottish landscape could accommodate further windfarm development is slightly higher in 2017 and 2019 than in earlier waves of the research. There has also been an increase since 2015 in the proportion of respondents who feel unable to give an opinion and a decrease in the proportion who disagree with the statement.

Figure 9: The landscape close to where I live could accommodate more windfarms



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19, 2017 & 2019: Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2014 & 2015

Figure 10: The landscape in the places I like to visit in Scotland could accommodate more windfarms



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19, 2017 & 2019: Scottish Opinion Survey 2013, 2014 & 2015

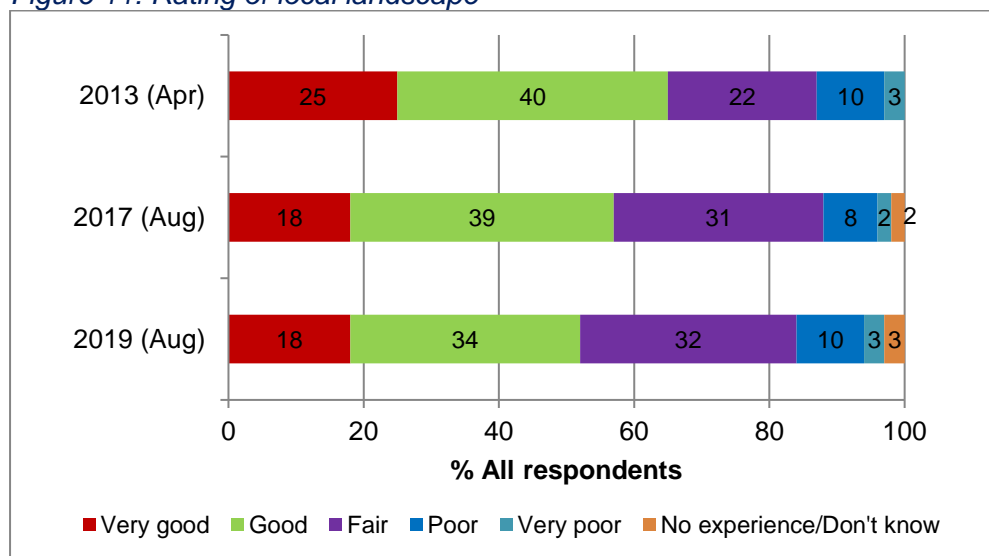
3.4 Public perceptions of local landscapes in Scotland

This section of the report summarises the findings from a set of questions about people’s perceptions of their **local landscapes**, included in the SNO in 2012, 2017 and 2019 and in the Scottish Opinion Survey in 2013.

In 2019, half of respondents rated their local landscape positively (52%), lower than in 2017 (57%) and 2013 (65%). As in previous survey waves, relatively few respondents actually gave their local landscape a negative rating (13%); a significant minority rated their local landscape as ‘fair’ (32%).

Older people, those in the AB social grade¹, people living in rural areas and those living in less deprived areas² were more likely to rate their local landscape positively. People who were unemployed were least likely to give their local landscape a positive rating.

Figure 11: Rating of local landscape



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 20, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013

NB As the rating scale used in the 2012 survey wave was different to the scale used in subsequent survey waves, only data from 2013, 2017 and 2019 are shown in the chart above.

¹ Social grade is a household classification system based on the occupation of the Chief Income Earner in the household: AB - higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional; C1 - supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional; C2 - skilled manual workers; DE - semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, casual and lowest grade workers, state pensioners and others who depend on the state for their income

² Outside the SIMD’s 15% most deprived areas

When asked what they **liked** most about their local landscape, respondents in 2019, as in previous waves of research, were most likely to mention the variety of outdoor places to go and things to do (mentioned by 28%) and that their local area was attractive (21%).

Among the things that respondents in 2019 **disliked** about their local landscape, the fact that the area wasn't well looked after was mentioned most frequently (by 28% of respondents).

Table 1: The things that people like and dislike about their local landscape

	Sep 2012	Apr 2013	Aug 2017	Aug 2019
What people like about their local landscape	% respondents mentioning:			
Variety of outdoor things to do/places to go	21	32	24	28
Area is attractive	48	33	24	21
Greenery	*	44	7	10
Trees	*	37	6	8
Well looked after	12	18	7	6
Opportunities to see nature/wildlife nearby	11	22	14	5
Open space	1	1	4	5
Quality of the buildings	5	7	1	2
Peace and quiet	23	40	1	1
Bustle, noise, visual activity	7	2	*	1
New developments	5	4	*	1
Sense of history	5	15	*	1
Sense of place/community	7	14	*	*
Nothing	9	3	18	13
What people dislike about their local landscape	% respondents mentioning:			
Area not well looked after	21	24	19	27
New developments	10	10	8	8
Bustle, noise, visual activity	11	12	6	7
Area is unattractive	7	9	5	5
Quality of the buildings	5	8	3	4
No outdoor things to do/places to go	8	7	2	4
Poor roads/pavements	0	2	3	3
No opportunities to see nature/wildlife nearby	4	6	7	2
Windfarms/pylons	1	1	4	2
No sense of place/community	3	3	*	1
No sense of history	2	2	0	0
Dog poo/fouling	1	1	0	0
Peace and quiet	1	1	0	0
Nothing	37		37	26

Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Questions 21, 2012 & 2017; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013

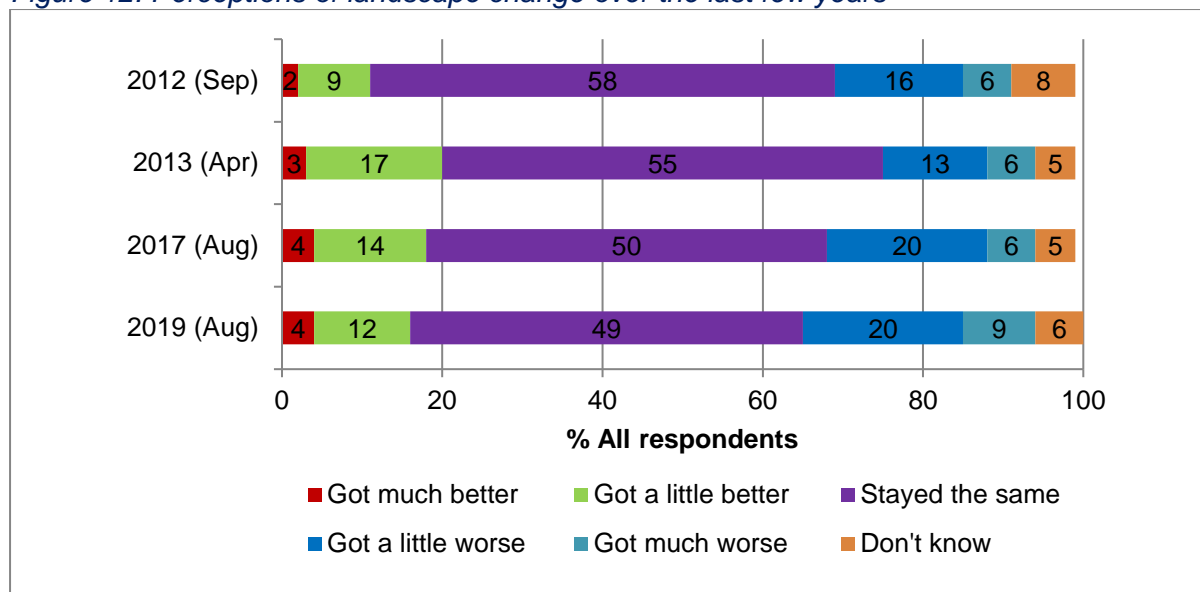
*Less than 1%

3.5 Perceptions of local landscape change

When asked to consider how their local landscape had changed over the last few years, respondents in 2019 were more likely to say it had got worse than better (29% versus 16%). The greatest proportion of respondents, however, thought it had stayed the same (49%). These findings are broadly similar to those of 2017 and 2013.

Younger people were more likely to perceive that their local landscape had improved while older people were more likely to say that the quality of their local landscape had reduced.

Figure 12: Perceptions of landscape change over the last few years



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 23a, 2012, 2017, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013

Respondents in 2019 who thought their local landscape had **improved** over the last few years were most likely to attribute this to the area being cleaner or better maintained than previously (mentioned by 38% of respondents).

Those who thought their local landscape had got **worse** over the last few years were most likely to attribute this to the area becoming run down and not looked after (mentioned by 23%), lack of interest or lack of funding from the Council (22%) and too many new developments or the area becoming too built up (18%).

Table 2: Perceptions of changes to local landscape in last few years

Views on local landscape	Sep 2012	Apr 2013	Aug 2017	Aug 2019
	% respondents mentioning:			
Why local landscape has got better	Base: 129 respondents*	Base: 208 respondents*	Base: 198 respondents*	Base: 174 respondents*
Cleaner/better taken care of/maintained	52	26	29	38
More flowers/planting	16	10	7	11
More/better greenspace/parks	3	0	19	9
Better developments	0	0	10	9
More amenities/attractions	17	15	9	5
Improved footpaths	12	10	3	3
Better wildlife	0	0	3	3
Better access	7	4	3	1
New/improved buildings	3	2	0	0
Better housing	3	0	0	0
More improvements	2	2	0	0
Improved car parking	2	0	0	0

Table continued overleaf

Views on local landscape	Sep 2012	Apr 2013	Aug 2017	Aug 2019
Why local landscape has got worse	Base: 249 respondents*	Base: respondents*	Base: 272 respondents*	Base: 295 respondents*
Run down, needs upgrading	19	12	15	23
Council not interested/lack of funding	0	0	13	22
More development/built up	14	12	12	18
Too many houses	20	10	21	14
More litter	20	14	15	13
Lack of/less greenspace	4	0	16	8
Wind turbines/wind farms	4	3	9	3
People don't care	0	0	5	3
Traffic	9	10	4	3
Vandalism/crime	11	8	*	2
Lack of amenities	6	8	*	2
Environmental pollution/climate change	0	0	0	2
Anti-social behaviour	5	8	*	*
Incomers	5	3	0	*
Poor land management	4	0	0	0
Shops shutting down/empty	3	0	0	0
More dog fouling	2	0	0	0

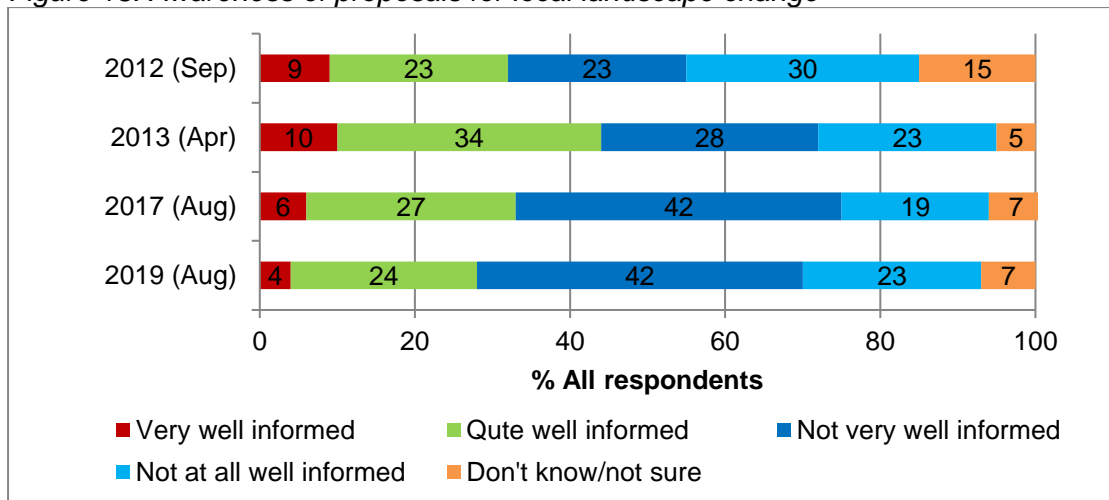
Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Questions 23b, 23c, 2012, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013
 *NB As some sample sizes are small, findings should be regarded as indicative only

3.6 Awareness of proposals for local landscape change

In line with previous waves of research, only a minority of respondents in 2019 said they felt well informed about proposals which might change their local landscape in some way (e.g. proposals for housing developments, roads, paths, forestry or wind farms). Overall, 28% of respondents felt well informed compared to 65% who felt uninformed. The proportion of respondents who felt informed in 2019 was lower than in any other previous research wave.

Older people, people in employment, retired people, those in the AB social grade and people living in rural areas were more likely to say they felt well informed about proposals for local landscape change.

Figure 13: Awareness of proposals for local landscape change



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 24, 2012, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013

When asked what sources of information they would use to find out about proposals which might impact on their local landscape, respondents in 2019 were most likely to say they would contact their Local Authority (mentioned by 32%) or consult their Local Authority website (8%). As in previous survey years, very few respondents mentioned local community groups or local consultations as potential sources of information.

Compared to previous research waves, few respondents in 2017 and 2019 mentioned the printed press, news programmes or 'word of mouth' as potential sources of information. A third of respondents in 2019 were unable to suggest an information source, higher than in any previous research wave.

Table 3: How people find out about proposed changes to their local landscape

Information sources mentioned	Sep 2012	Apr 2013	Aug 2017	Aug 2019
Contact Local Authority/Council	20	37	29	32
Internet	0	9	13	10
Local Authority/Council website	0	0	8	8
Newspapers/magazines	39	42	7	6
Relevant national body/organisation (e.g. RSPCA, NTS, conservation organisation)	*	2	2	4
Social media	0	0	2	3
TV/radio news	14	12	2	2
Word of mouth	20	20	1	2
Local Community Council/website	4	10	3	2
Local notices/posters	0	19	3	1
Scottish Government/website	0	0	0	1
Other relevant clubs/societies	*	2	1	*
Local Community/Development Trust	1	1	*	*
Local woodland/environment group	0	2	*	0
Local park/greenspace group	0	2	*	0
Local development Plan consultation	0	2	*	0
Community-led exercise	0	2	*	0
Local land owner/manager	1	1	0	0
Don't know/not sure	14	9	22	33

Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 25, 2012, 2017 & 2019; Scottish Opinion Survey 2013

Annex - Questions on 'Landscape' asked on the Scottish Nature Omnibus

NB These questions were asked in the Scottish Nature Omnibus Survey in August 2017.

SECTION 8 – SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPES

Q19 Thinking about Scotland's landscapes, please could you indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Do you agree strongly, agree slightly, neither agree nor disagree, disagree slightly or disagree strongly

Scotland's landscapes are changing for the better

Scotland's landscapes make an important contribution to the economy (e.g. for tourism)

Scotland's finest landscapes are well looked after

More effort is needed to improve the landscape around Scotland's towns and cities

Scotland's areas of wildland should be protected

Most new development in the countryside is having a positive impact on Scotland's landscapes

Windfarms in Scotland are generally well located and designed

The landscape close to where I live could accommodate more windfarms

The landscape in the places I like to visit in Scotland could accommodate more windfarms

Q20 Please could you think about your local landscape, that is, your local surroundings and outdoor places. If you live in a town that might mean streets, buildings, local parks, gardens or trees; if you live in the country that might mean fields, roads, hills, woodland, cliffs or beaches.

Thinking about where you live, how would you rate the landscape in your local area?

Very Good
Good
Fair
Poor
Very Poor
No experience/DK

Q21 What do you particularly like about the landscape of your local area?

PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOX BELOW

Q22 And what do you particularly dislike about the landscape of your local area?

PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOX BELOW

Q23a Thinking about the landscape of your local area, do you think things have got better, stayed the same or got worse during the last 3 years?

- Got much better (route to Q23b)
- Got a little better (route to Q23b)
- Stayed the same
- Got a little worse (route to Q23c)
- Got much worse (route to Q23c)
- Don't know

IF GOT BETTER OR WORSE, ASK:

Q23b Why do you say that the landscape of your local area has got better?

PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOX BELOW

Q23c Why do you say that the landscape of your local area has got worse?

PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOX BELOW

Q24 How well informed do you feel about proposals which could change the landscape of your local area in some way? For example, proposals for housing developments, roads, paths, forestry or wind farms
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

- Very well informed
- Quite well informed
- Not very well informed
- Not at all well informed
- Don't know/not sure

Q25 Which organisations or sources of information would you use to find out more about proposed changes to the landscape of your local area?

PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOX BELOW