



# A shared vision for a natural floodplain

A summary of the 2020  
community engagement  
events on the river and  
floodplain restoration  
project at RSPB Insh  
Marshes.





# Background

Stretching between Kingussie and Kincaig along the River Spey, RSPB Insh Marshes is a 1,000-hectare floodplain. Due to historical modifications, this amazing floodplain is unable to function in a **sustainable** way, with knock-on negative impact on floodplain management, wildlife and people.

Working with the **local community**, we're developing a long-term vision to transform Insh Marshes into a prime example of a restored floodplain and river system. These changes will help increase the resilience of local communities and the natural riches of Insh Marshes against climate change and provide a home for a range of important species such as spotted crake and string sedge.

This document is a summary of the community engagement events which took place in 2020. **Thank you** to everyone who contributed to this consultation.

# Why consult the community?

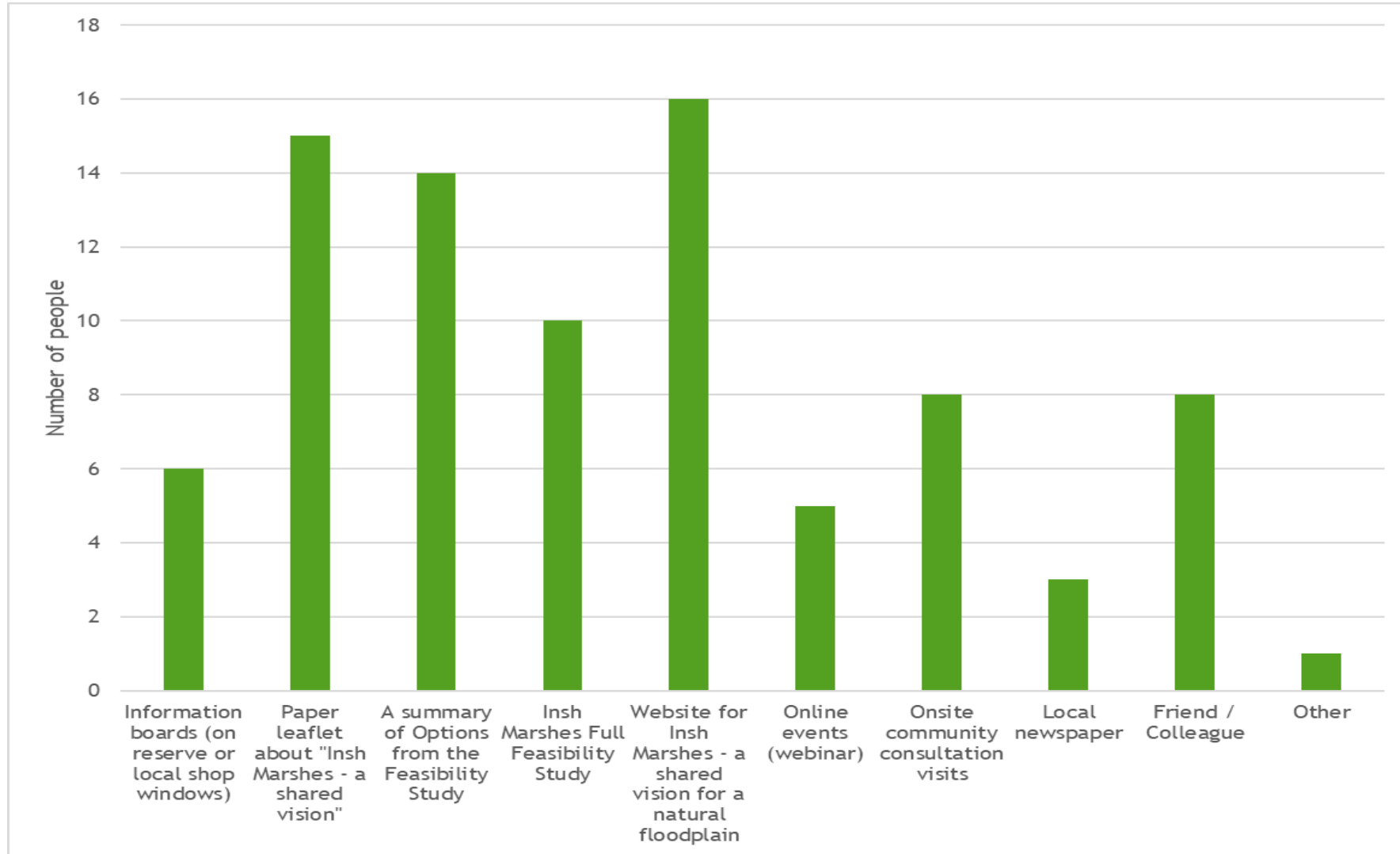
In 2016, RSPB Insh Marshes commissioned a feasibility study, funded by SEPA's Water Environment Fund and Cairngorms National Park Authority, to look at **options for the future to ensure the sustainability of Insh Marshes** not only as an important site for flora and fauna but by continuing to offer flood protection.

Our environmental consultants, EnviroCentre, created a computer model using data collected from the marsh and previous flood events. This model assessed the current conditions and offered **different options to restore the river and floodplain** by removing redundant embankments to reconnect the river and floodplain, initiating in-river process where tributaries have been straightened and canalised, and reducing the drainage function of the defunct ditch systems to reduce the negative impact on protected wetland habitats.

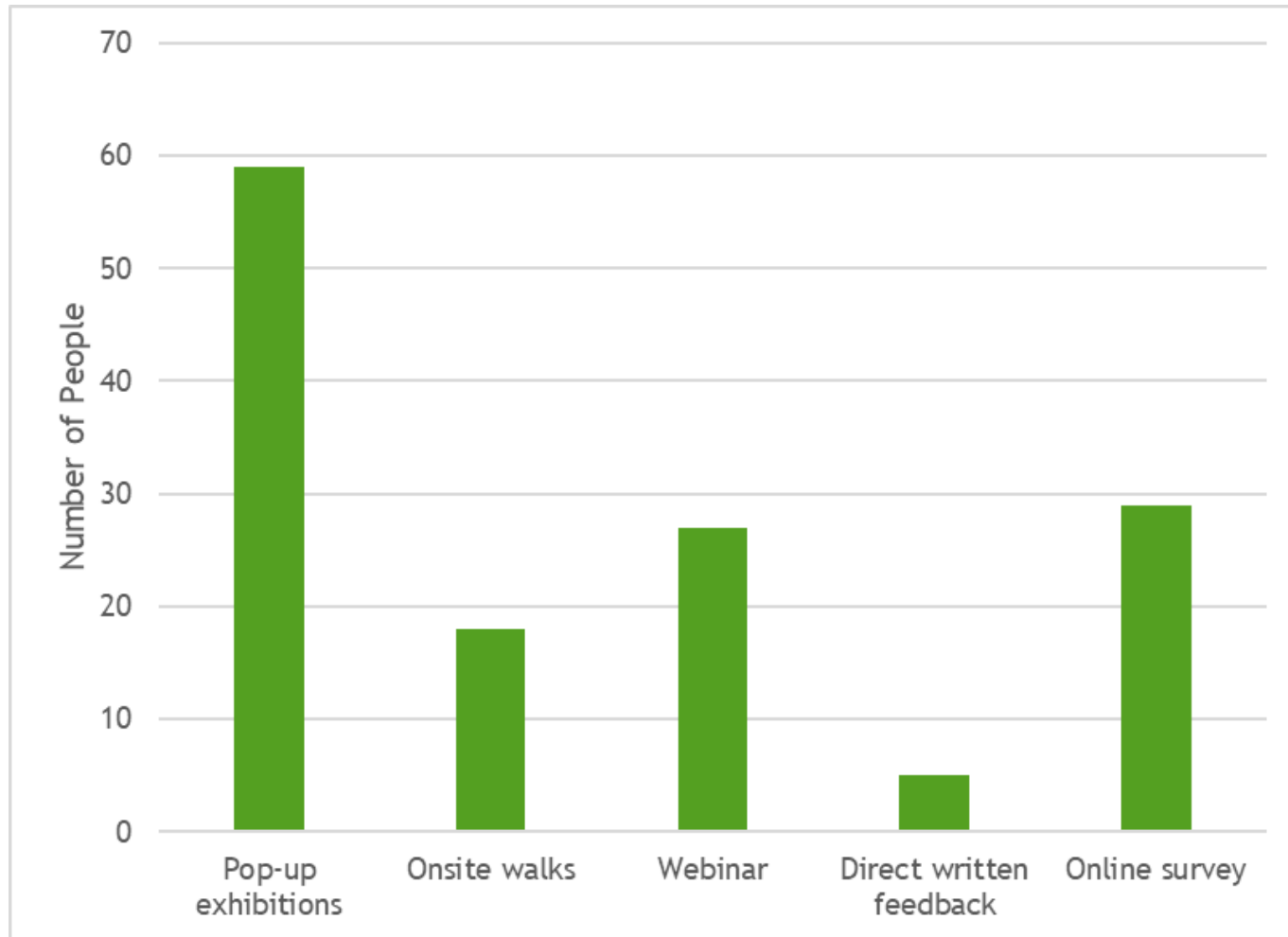
We wanted to **find out what our neighbours thought** about these options – which people preferred and what their concerns were. Although the land is owned by RSPB Scotland, the way we manage the land impacts local communities. We believe our neighbours deserve a say in the future plans for Insh Marshes.



# How did people find out about the project?



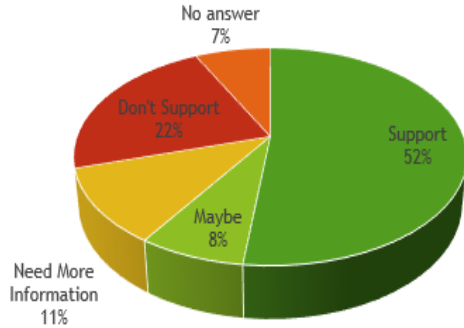
# How did people share their views?



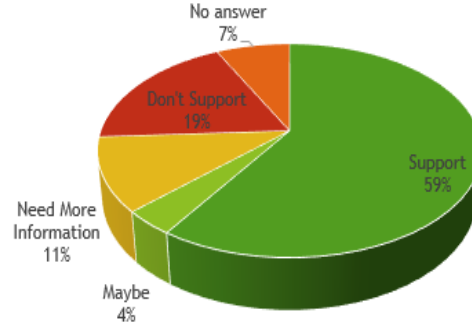
For five weeks, the Insh Marshes team hosted various events including pop-up exhibitions, a webinar, and on-site walks to talk to the local community and offer opportunities for questions or to clarify information. This also included site visits with local community councils. We want to thank all those who engaged with us at this point, especially those who offered constructive suggestions and comments.

# What did the community think of the options?

1 (a) Reconnecting the River and floodplain - Embankment removal at Lynchat



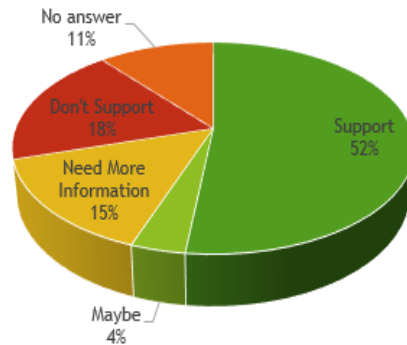
2 (a) Naturalising river dynamics - Channel re-meandering of Ruthven and Raitts burn



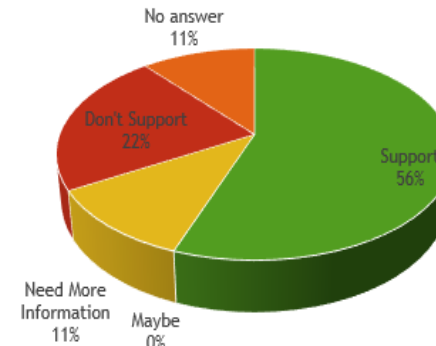
2 (b) Naturalising river dynamics - Removing the bank protection on the Tromie



2 (c) Naturalising river dynamics - In channel measures on the tributaries

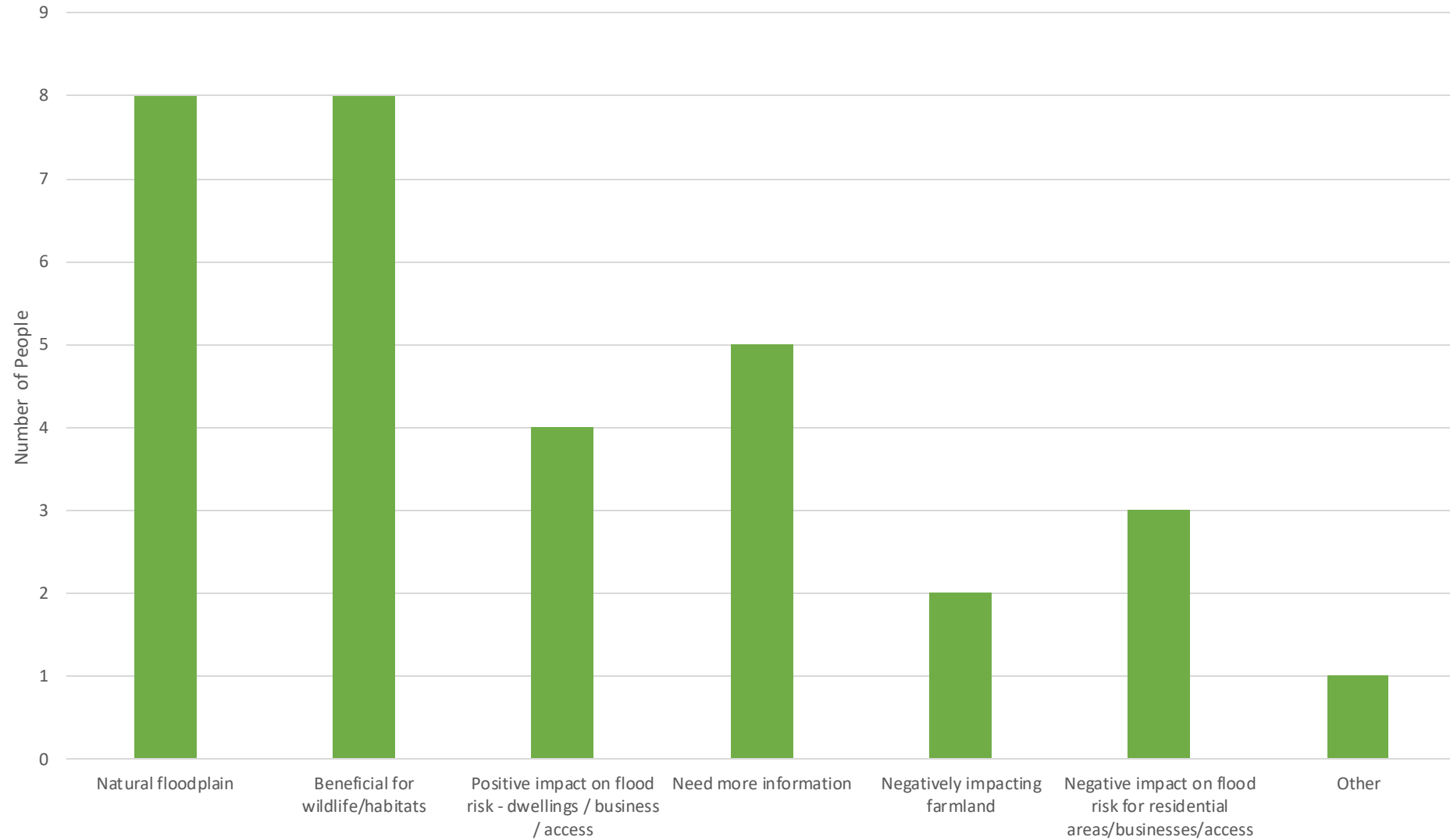


3 (a) Improving wetland habitat - ditch blocking in areas susceptible to summer droughts



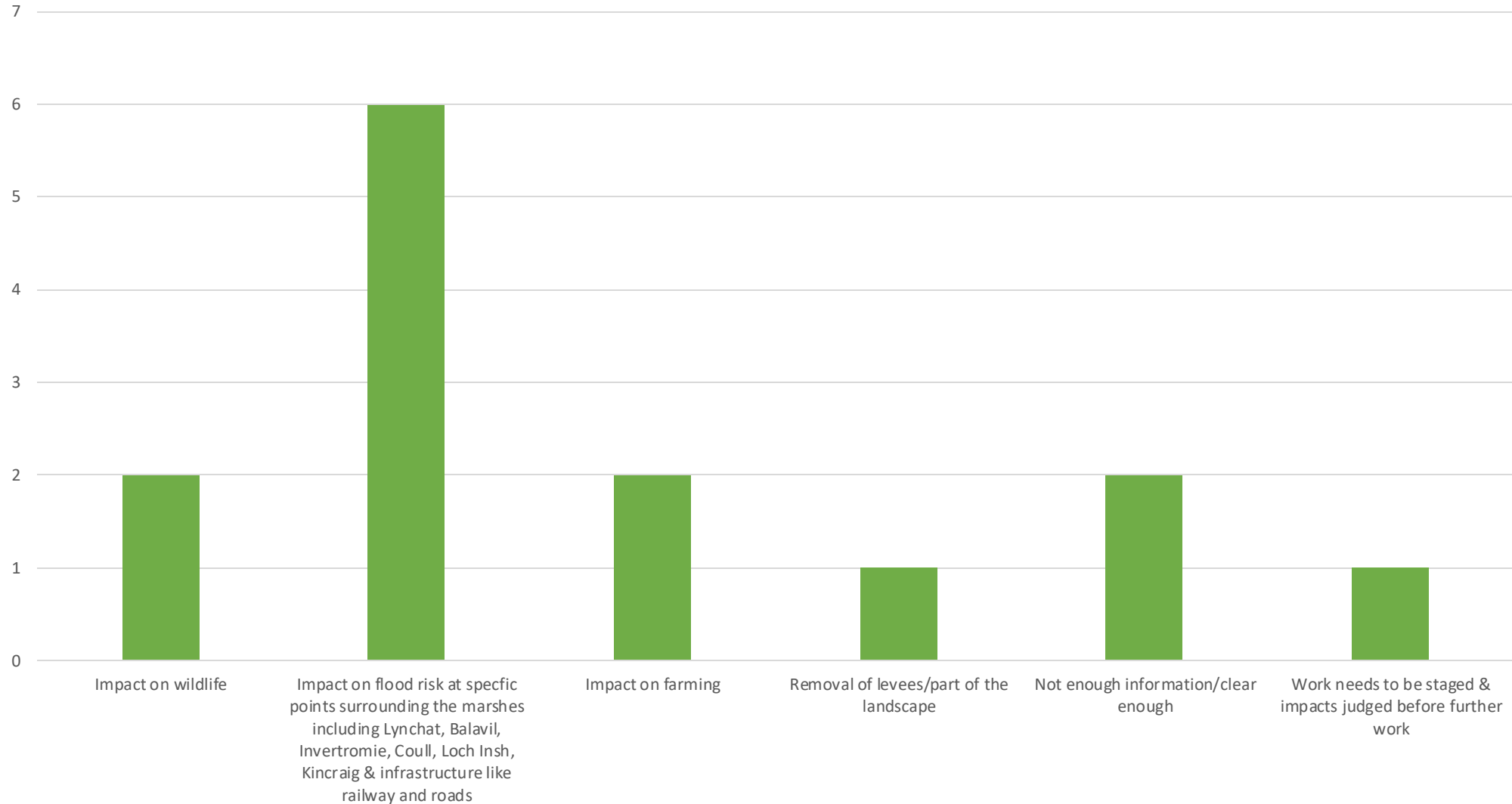
The majority of those who answered were in support of the options, apart from option 2b which was only supported by 48% of respondents. However, it is clear that respondents would like more information on options, particularly 2(b) and 2 (c). None of the options showed a majority of those responding saying that they didn't support the option.

# Why do you prefer these options?





# What concerns do you have?





# What were the reasons for supporting the project?

*“They would **protect** the marshes from drying up in increasingly hotter summers.”*

*“By undertaking all the options it will maximise the **benefits** to naturalise the river ecosystem.”*

*“Knowing the RSPB wardens, I have faith that **they know their patch**, will have researched the subject properly and have a good appreciation of the approach.”*

*“This is a great project that I really support. **Climate change** is going to have a big impact in the future and we need to ensure communities and nature are resilient.”*

*“I can see the benefits of having a more natural floodplain in retaining water, slowing the flow and therefore **reducing flood risks** to human communities down river e.g. in Aviemore. I agree with the aims of the RSPB reserve in protecting and enhancing the **wetland habitat for breeding birds** e.g. Curlew, Lapwing and Snipe. The fact that these proposed actions will also benefit other birds, plants, insects, mammals, fish and other aquatic life seems like a win-win situation to me.”*

# What were the concerns and questions raised?

Most of the concerns and questions raised related to the impact on flood risk at specific points, or queries about the validity of the modelling undertaken by EnviroCentre. Some people also had questions relating to access and agriculture.

All questions and comments have been answered in detail and our full response and further updates can now be found on the project website: [www.cairngormsconnect.org.uk/projects/insh](http://www.cairngormsconnect.org.uk/projects/insh)



# What happens next?

After listening to and discussing a range of views and concerns with members of the local community, the Insh Marshes team returned to EnviroCentre, our environmental consultations, for help to re-model several options in more detail – a key concern that came up in the consultation.

The team has also been working on a thorough response to feedback and detailed answers to questions asked by the community, as well as an FAQ document and a log of questions that cannot currently be answered fully. These can now be downloaded from the project website: [www.cairngormsconnect.org.uk/projects/insh](http://www.cairngormsconnect.org.uk/projects/insh)

**Thank you to everyone who took part in the consultation for taking the time to help shape the future of Insh Marshes!**