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Viticulture Test and Trial Questionnaire Report

20th May 2021

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The Viticulture Test and Trial is being carried out by the National Association for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty on behalf of Defra. It forms part of the development of the schemes that reward environmental land management.

The Test and Trial was established with the assistance of the South Downs National Park Association and the Surrey Hills AONB Unit.



1 Background

The Kent Downs AONB Unit has been commissioned to carry out a Test and Trial that explores possible actions within viticulture for Defra's schemes that reward farmers and land managers for providing public goods. As part of this work a series of workshops and interviews took place with farmers, viticulturalists and land managers as well as those that work in the wine industry. This work was backed up by case studies, global research into best practice and a report of recommendations produced by viticultural consultants, Vinescapes. All of this work was used to create a series of recommendations for actions that might be appropriate for schemes that reward environmental benefits. The actions were based around three primary purposes:

1. Provide viticulturalists with access to best practice guidance through the creation of land management plans, the opportunity to join viticulture based clusters and providing capital payments for viticulturalists to achieve best environmental practice.
2. Support actions that improve soil quality, reduce pesticide applications and promote biodiversity.
3. Provide access to the countryside and education that complements the objectives of the vineyard.

1.1 Purpose of questionnaire

The Kent Downs AONB Unit has conducted a Test & Trial on behalf of Defra to investigate how the viticulture sector can be rewarded for the environmental benefits that good practice within the industry can bring. Previously we had carried out extensive research into best practice and consulted widely with farmers, land managers, viticulturalists and industry to identify a set of actions for which vine growers can be rewarded. The survey was an opportunity for people to tell us what they think of the suggested actions that the Kent Downs intends to submit to Defra at the end of the project in June 2021.

The draft actions that were produced aim to provide opportunities for viticulturalists to benefit from the schemes that reward environmental benefits. It was suggested that the recipients read through the actions proposed before filling in the survey, but it was not essential if they had sat on one of the workshops. It is proposed that all the actions will be optional, and growers can mix and match according to their own requirements.

These actions have been drafted based on the work and research undertaken at the recent workshops held with growers and industry. The survey was sent out to all members of WineGB and the viticulturalists who participated or showed an interest in the workshops held across the whole country.

Although the Test and Trial recommendations and draft actions were co-created with farmers, land managers and representatives of the industry it was considered that there was also a need to test these results. Hence, despite this work not being part of the original Test and Trial plan, a questionnaire was designed and circulated to gather opinions about the proposed actions. The questionnaire was open for responses between 19th April and 15th May 2021 and was circulated to the following groups:

- All who had attended workshops.
- The questionnaire was advertised by WineGB.

1.2 Limitations of questionnaire

Due to the time and resource limitations that the Test and Trial is working under, there were inevitably some compromises that needed to be made. This means that there are some limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results.

Limitation	Consequence
<p>Self-selecting group – this questionnaire was sent to all who had taken part in the viticulture Test and Trial. Wine GB kindly circulated the questionnaire to its members and links to the questionnaire also appeared in several wine producer’s publications.</p>	<p>The participating group will not be representative of all viticulturalists. However, the number of responses and the geographical range of responses does give a level of confidence that these views do reflect opinions in a significant percentage of the industry.</p>
<p>Lack of depth to questions – very few questions were asked. It was considered that having a short questionnaire that only required quick responses would be completed by more people.</p>	<p>41 responses were received. Also, the final question allowed respondents to give more detail about their feelings about what schemes should pay for. The workshops and interviews earlier in the Test and Trial also allowed growers to have their say and were used as the basis for the draft actions presented in the questionnaire.</p>
<p>Leading questions – Some of the questions asked how respondents felt about specific actions. Hence questions such as <i>“Should the viticulture sector be able to receive payments from Defra that reward environmental best practice?”</i> were asked.</p>	<p>As the aim of the questionnaire was to find out how respondents felt about actions that had been co-designed with growers and the industry, this approach was unavoidable. The primary purpose of this was to see if people fundamentally disagreed with the draft actions or supported them.</p>
<p>Absence of proposed payment rates – At the time the questionnaire was written, proposed intervention rates had not been calculated and were not included in the questionnaire.</p>	<p>Some growers said in their response that without knowing about intervention rates it was difficult to say whether they would be interested in participating. Consequently, answers reflect whether a grower has an appetite to be involved in the schemes.</p>

1.3 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was carried out using Google Forms and can be found at

<https://forms.gle/tDRqDLgvnMMemFAcA>

It consisted of 15 questions, only four of which were compulsory.

1. How would you describe yourself? (compulsory)
Multiple choice (Grow grapes as part of a wider far business, Grapes are the only crop I grow, I do not grow grapes but am considering it)
2. If you do grow grapes, how many hectares of your land is dedicated to vineyards? (compulsory)
Multiple choice (Less than 1 hectare, 1 hectare or more but less than 5 hectares, 5 hectares or more but less than 20 hectares, 20 hectares or more, Not applicable)
3. Do you belong to any certification schemes? (compulsory)
Multiple answer (Sustainable Wines of GB, LEAF, Red Tractor, Soil Association organic, Biodynamic, Other)
4. Is your operation open to the public?
(Yes or no)
5. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. RG23) - This is only collected to find out what part of the country you are responding from. (compulsory)
Short text answer
6. Should the viticulture sector be able to receive payments from Defra that reward environmental best practice?
Answer between 1 and 10 (1 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree)
7. How likely would you be to take part in a scheme that rewarded environmental benefits (often referred to as ELMS)?
Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)
8. What would be the most important factor in your decision for question 7?
Multiple choice (The level of payment, How easy it is to apply, Access to information and guidance about best practice, n/a, other)
9. A land management plan for vineyards should be a precondition to joining a scheme that rewards environmental benefits?
Answer between 1 and 10 (1 = strongly disagree to 10 = strongly agree)
10. Would you join a cluster of vineyards that work together to drive forward best environmental practice and work together to develop applications to schemes that reward environmental benefits?
Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)
11. Would you consider maintaining continuous ground cover (except under vines) by not tilling soil, drilling or sowing insectary plants and leaving some parts of the headland unmown to qualify for a payment? (action 6 in the Proposed Viticulture Actions document)
Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)
12. Would you consider developing and maintaining a species-rich grass sward with plants native to your locality and reflecting the character of local semi-natural grassland? This

management practice could take place between rows and/or in headlands to qualify for a payment? (action 7 in the Proposed Viticulture Actions document)

Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)

13. Would you consider installing wildlife friendly features (e.g. beetle banks, habitat piles, pollinator strips, long grass and low scrub) in or around your vineyard to qualify for a payment? (action 9 in the Proposed Viticulture Actions document)

Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)

14. Would you consider allowing public access (usually a waymarked route) for a payment?

Multiple choice (Definitely or almost certainly, Possibly, Not sure, Probably not, Definitely not, n/a)

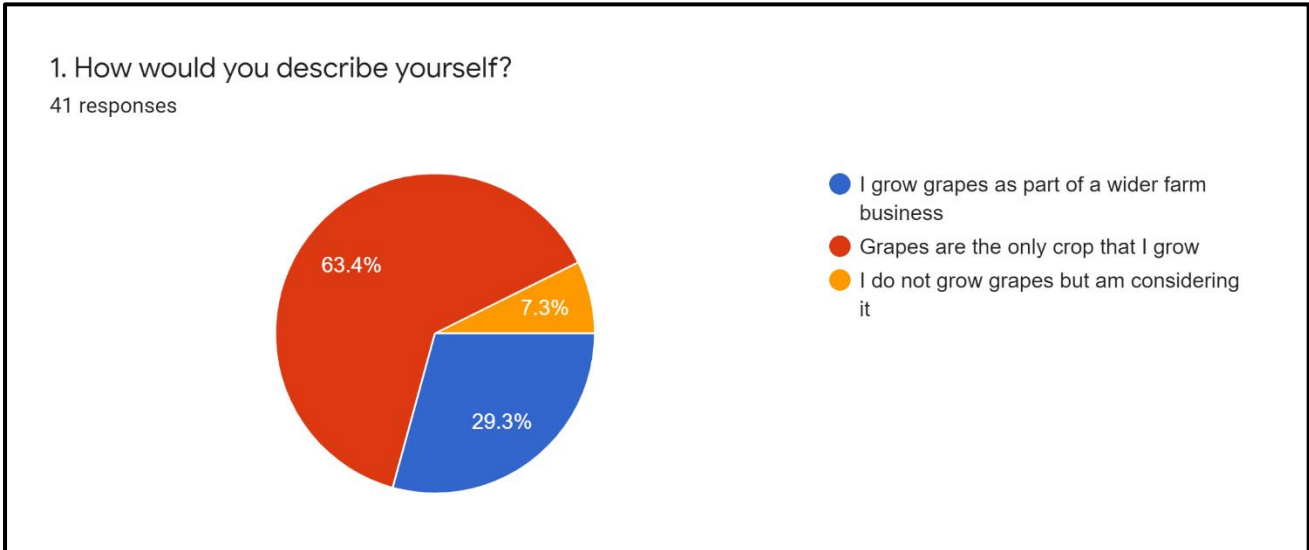
15. Do you have any comments about any of the questions you have been asked or any broader comments about how schemes that reward environmental benefits might apply to viticulture?

Free text answer

2 Results

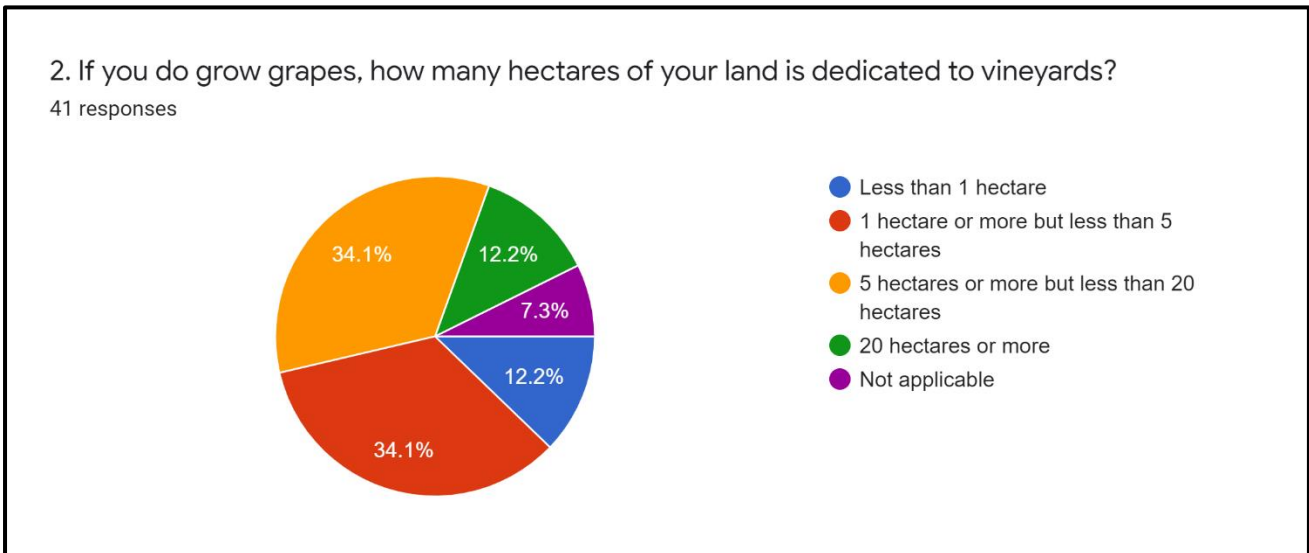
41 people answered the questionnaire. The results are summarised here and the full results can be found in the appendix.

1. How would you describe yourself?



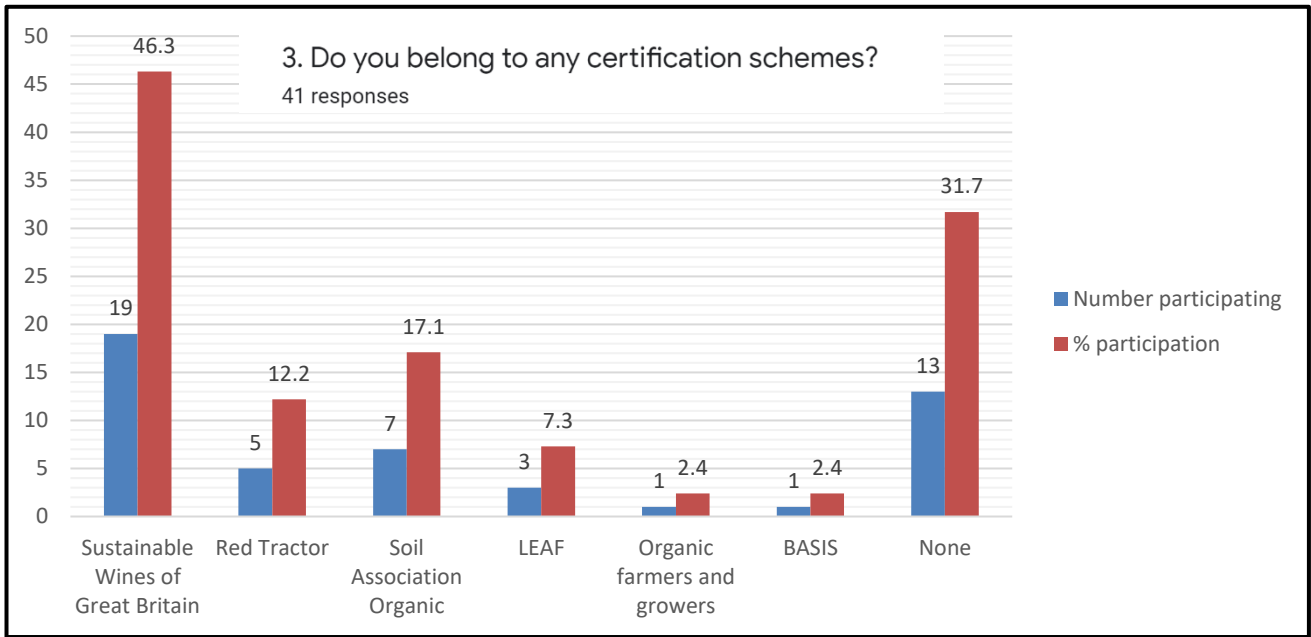
This pie chart shows that a higher percentage of viticulturalists responded to the questionnaire than those in mixed farming who grow other row crops and/or arable.

2. If you do grow grapes, how many hectares of your land is dedicated to vineyards?



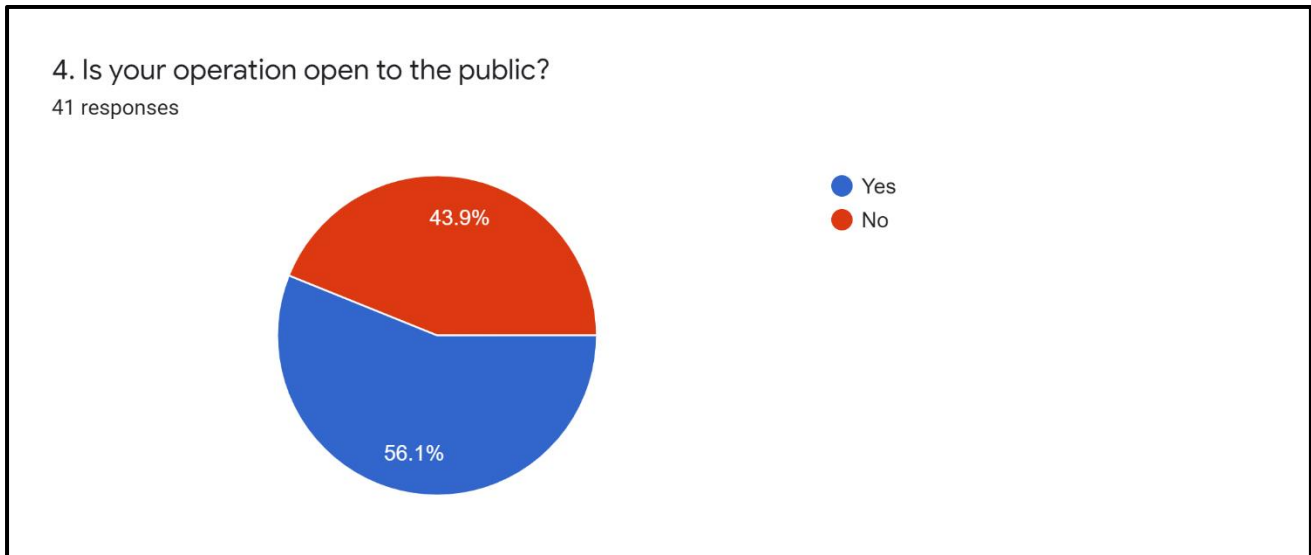
Of the 41 responses, fourteen grow less than 20 hectares but more than 5 hectares and the same number grow less than 5 hectares but more than 1 hectare. Approximately half of the respondents could be classed as the larger vineyards and half are smaller. It appears that three of the responses were from people who maybe did not have a vineyard but were thinking of planting one.

3. Do you belong to any certification schemes?



The largest percentage of growers are members of Sustainable Wines of Great Britain with 46% and then those who do not belong to any certification scheme (31.7%) Seven of the respondents were members of the Soil Association. These schemes are followed closely by Red Tractor and LEAF (these growers may well be growing other crops as well as vines). Some respondents are members of several certification schemes. However, only one was thinking about biodynamic growing.

4. Is your operation open to the public?

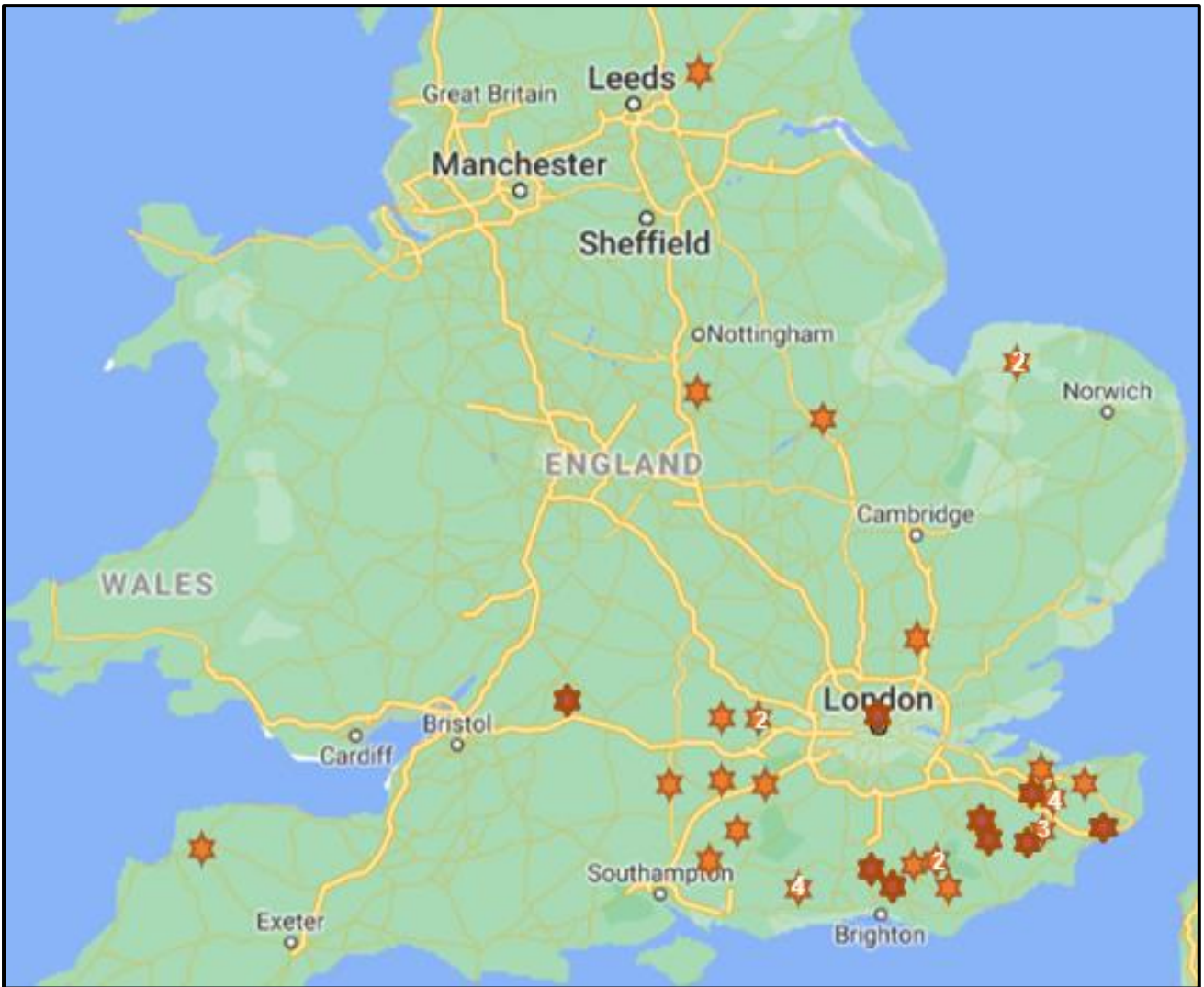


Over 50% of the vineyards were open to the public which suggests that there may be potential amongst these vineyards to support public access and educational access.

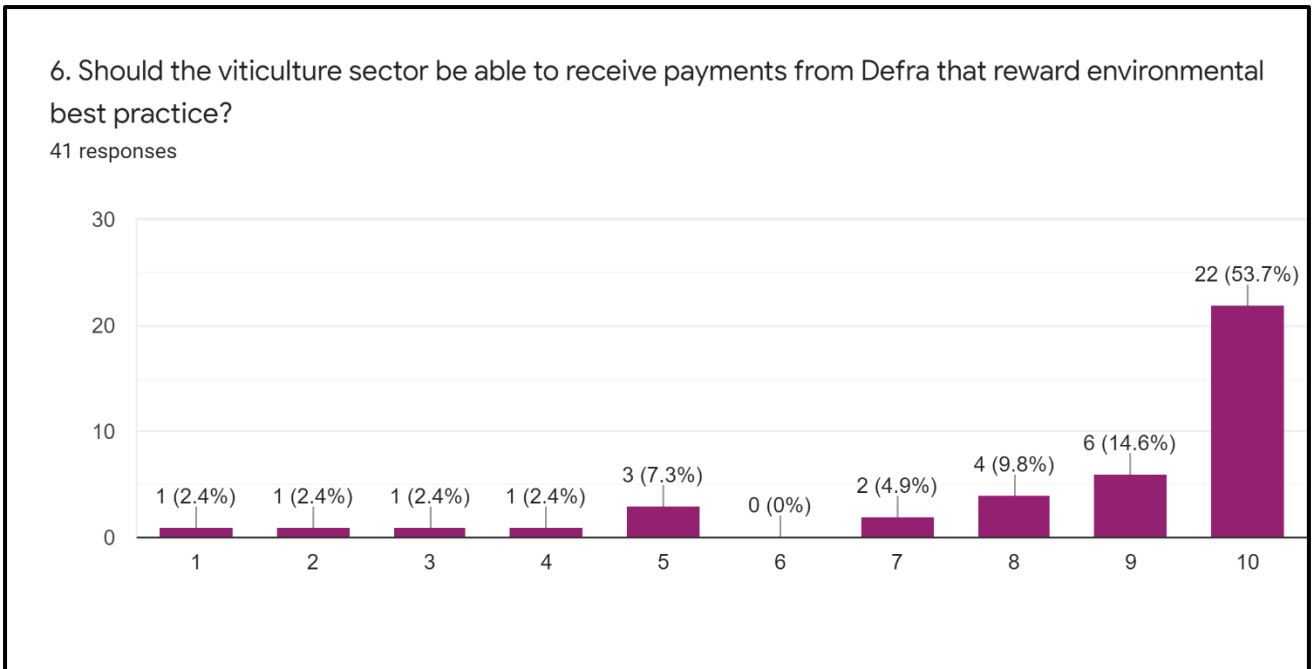
5. What is the first part of your postcode?

This question shows where the respondents were based and the majority of vineyards that responded are in the south east of the country which reflects the areas of the country that have the most vineyards.

The map shows the distribution of those who responded to the questionnaire with a cluster in the Kent Downs AONB and the South Downs NP. A vineyard from Yorkshire was the most northerly respondent. The numbers refer to the number of respondents from the same postcode area.

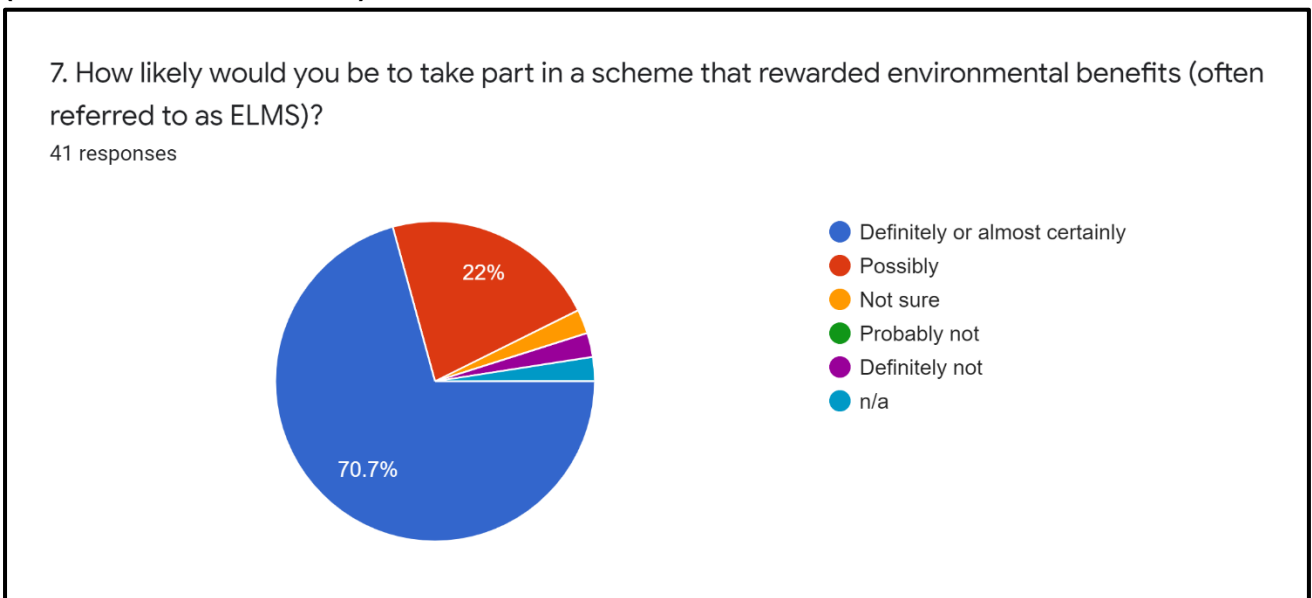


6. Should the viticulture sector be able to receive payments from Defra that reward environmental best practice?



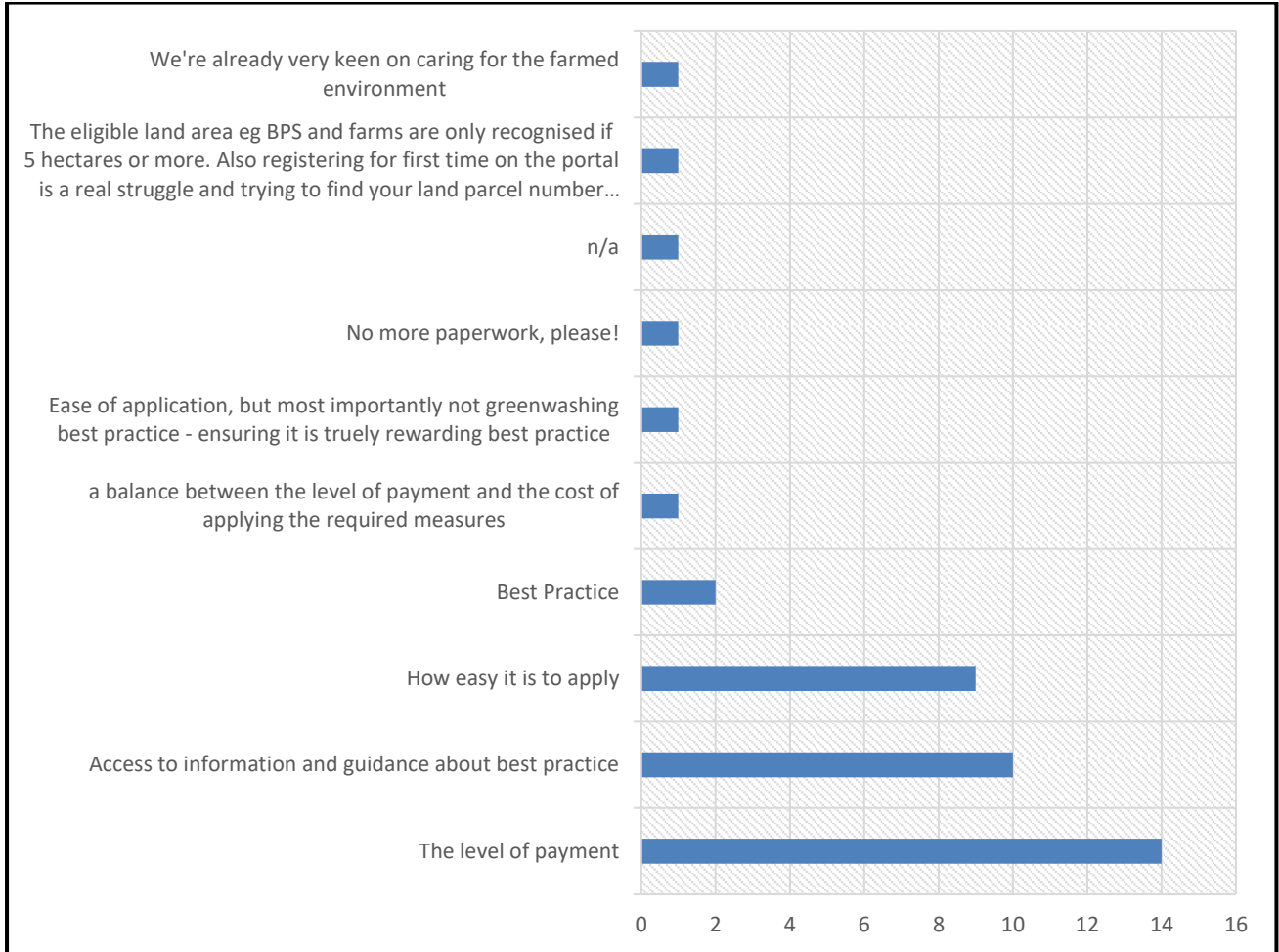
Of the respondents the majority, 83% agreed that the viticulture sector should be able to receive payments from Defra that reward environmental best practice. One person deemed it not applicable and one other was against all further paperwork.

7. How likely would you be to take part in a scheme that rewarded environmental benefits (often referred to as ELMS)?



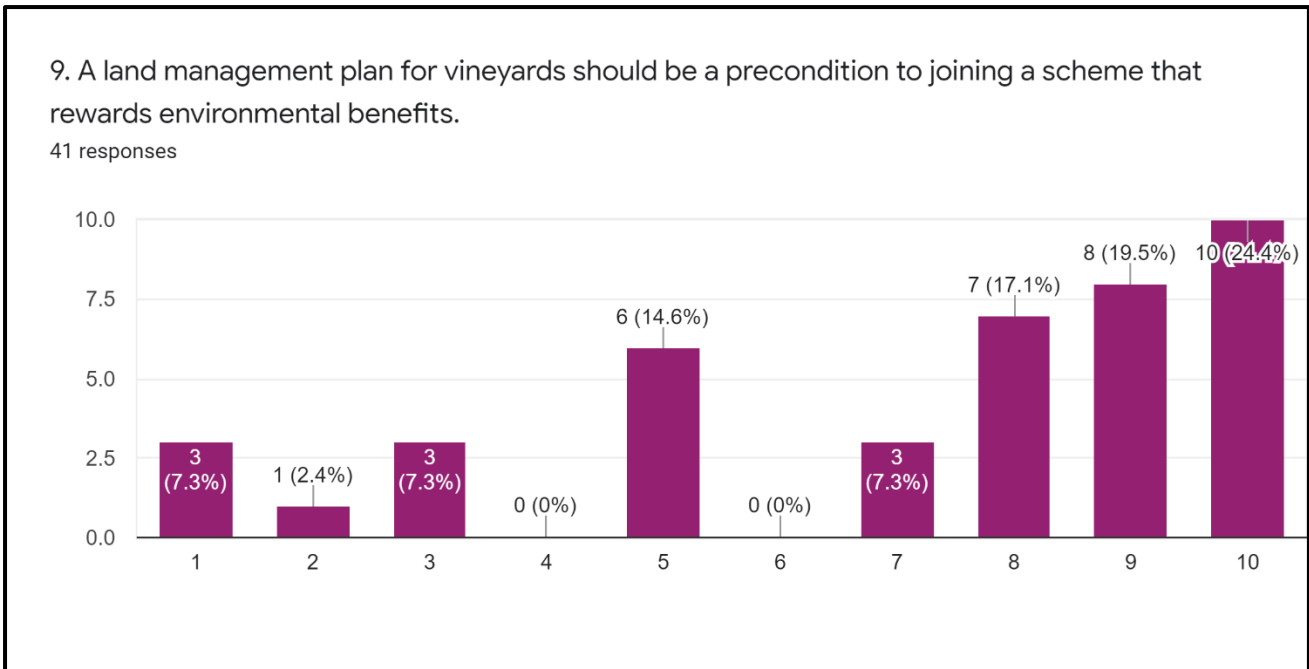
The results show that viticulture businesses are very positive about taking part in environmental land management schemes.

8. What would be the most important factor in your decision for question 7?



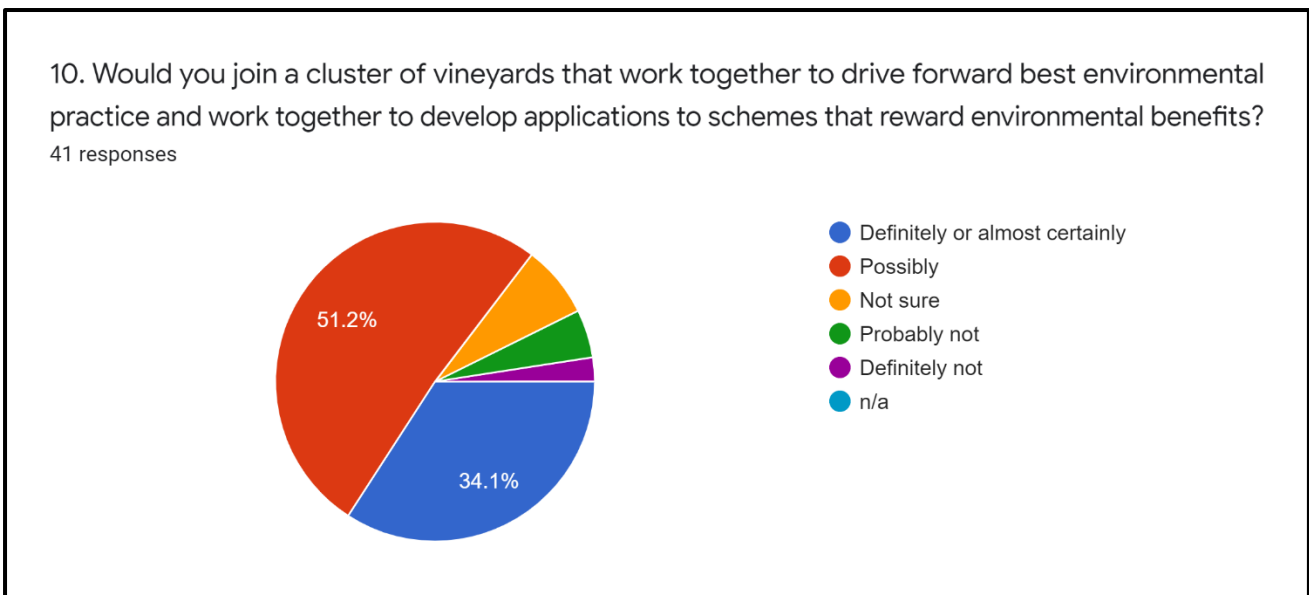
The response shows there are a variety of reasons for participating. However, the level of payment was cited as the most important and needs to be right for the business. This is followed by access to guidance regarding best practice and then the ease to apply. A closer look at the data shows that there appears to be little correlation between size of vineyard and the answer given to this question though the smaller vineyards were slightly more concerned about how easy it would be to apply.

9. A land management plan for vineyards should be a precondition to joining a scheme that rewards environmental benefits?



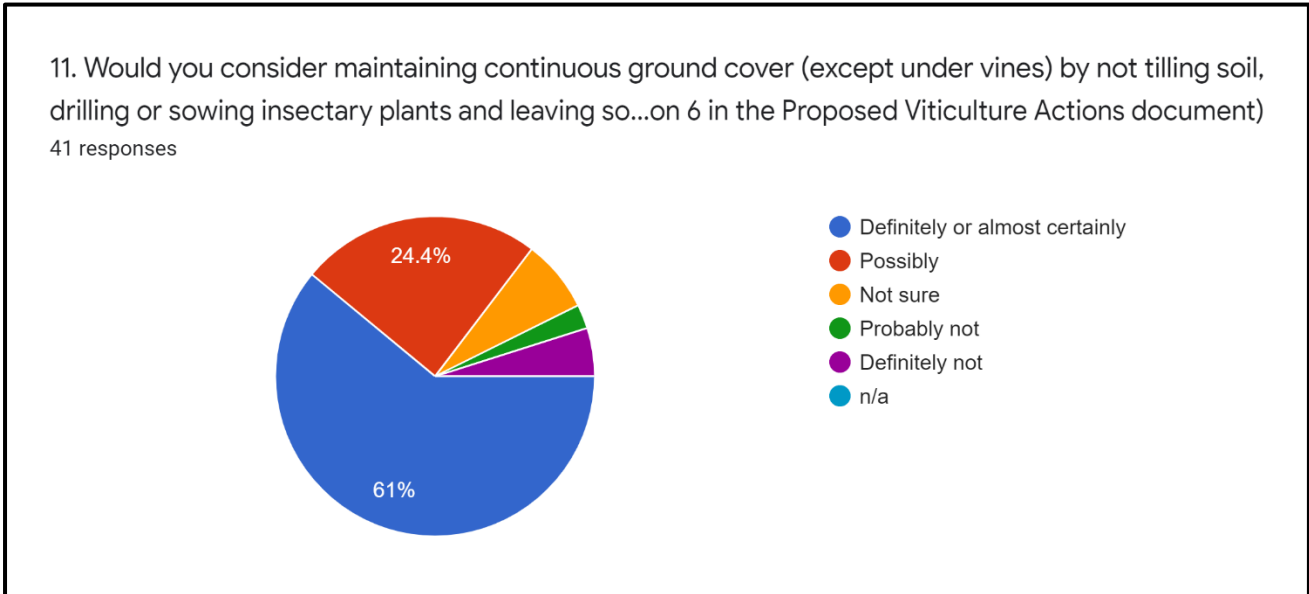
68% of respondents strongly agreed (score of 7 or over) that a land management plan should be a precondition of joining a scheme with only 17% strongly disagreeing (score of 4 or less). No information was given in the questionnaire itself about who would pay for the land management plan, what it would contain and who would write it.

10. Would you join a cluster of vineyards that work together to drive forward best environmental practice and work together to develop applications to schemes that reward environmental benefits?



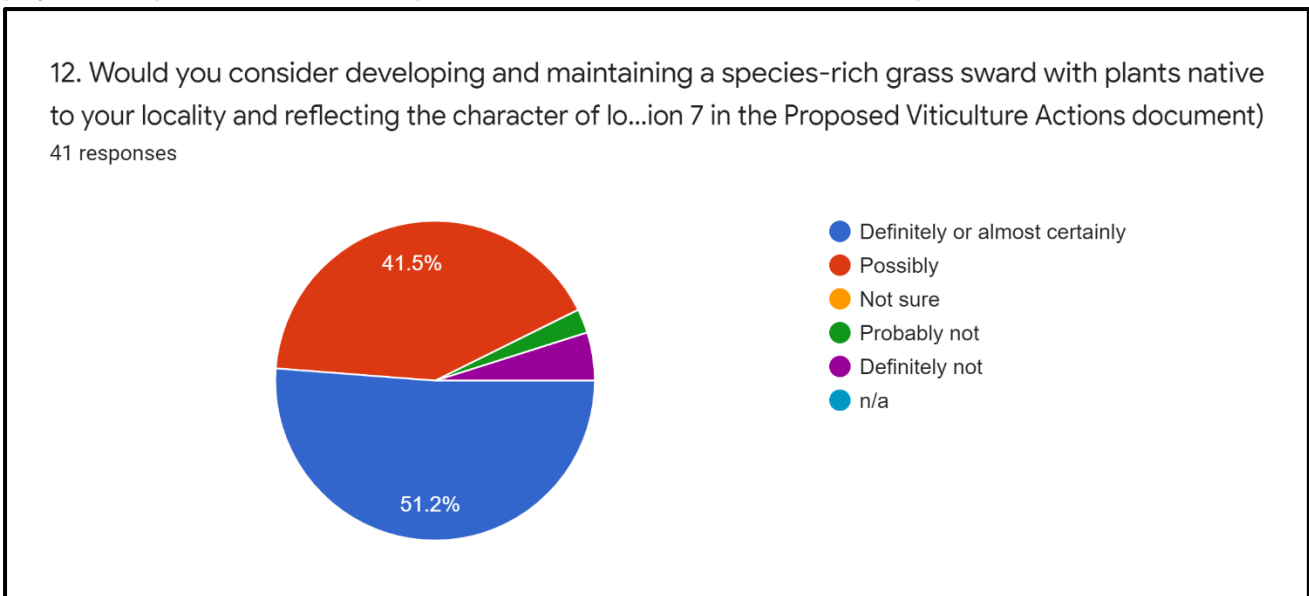
Although there was broad support for this action, over 50% would only 'possibly' join a cluster.

11. Would you consider maintaining continuous ground cover (except under vines) by not tilling soil, drilling or sowing insectary plants and leaving some parts of the headland unmown to qualify for a payment? (action 6 in the Proposed Viticulture Actions document)



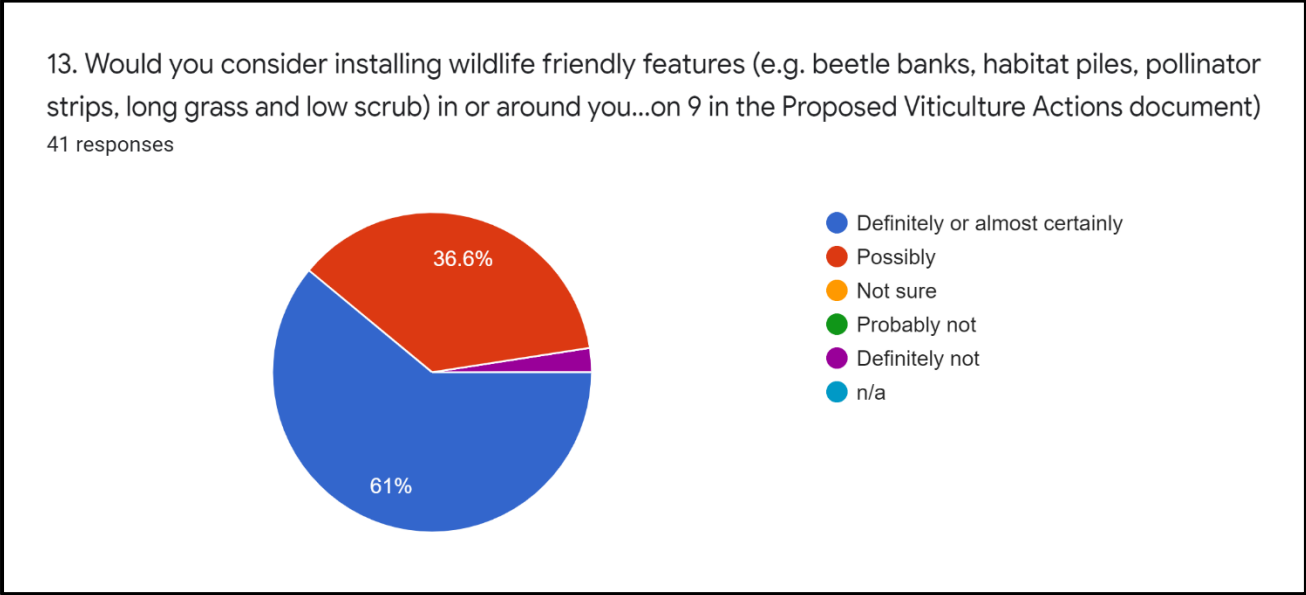
61% of respondents would definitely or almost certainly consider this action making it the second most popular of the actions in the questionnaire.

12. Would you consider developing and maintaining a species-rich grass sward with plants native to your locality and reflecting the character of local semi-natural grassland? This management practice could take place between rows and/or in headlands to qualify for a payment? (action 7 in the Proposed Viticulture Actions document)



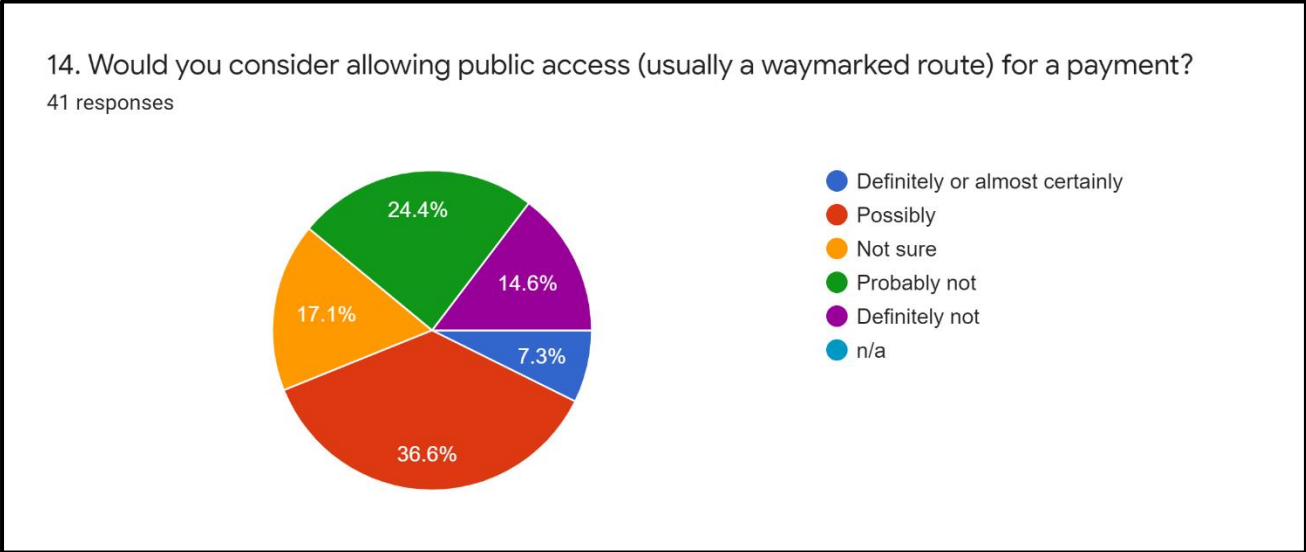
Following on from the previous question, there was a drop of 10% of respondents who would agree to develop or maintain a species rich sward of plants native to their locality. This could be especially important in a protected landscape with distinct local flora.

13. Would you consider installing wildlife friendly features (e.g. beetle banks, habitat piles, pollinator strips, long grass and low scrub) in or around your vineyard to qualify for a payment? (action 9 in the Proposed Viticulture Actions document)



This was the most popular action with 96% of respondents giving a positive response. The reason for the two respondents who would definitely not install wildlife friendly features is not known.

14. Would you consider allowing public access (usually a waymarked route) for a payment?



This was the least popular of all of the actions included in the questionnaire. A larger number of vineyards were wavering on allowing public access to their vineyard. Also, some of the vineyards are under 0.5 hectares and it would not be a feasible action.

Biosecurity has been cited as a problem with public access, with them setting as an example of verticillium wilt in hops. This is highly contagious and can be carried on footwear.

15. Do you have any comments about any of the questions you have been asked or any broader comments about how schemes that reward environmental benefits might apply to viticulture?

The 13 responses received for this question elicited a wide range of opinions and this shows that there are a lot of issues that viticulturalists care passionately about the work that is already done for the environment. Concerns raised included the potential biosecurity risks of public access, concerns over the possible levels of bureaucracy and whether the smaller growers would be left out of the schemes. It is impossible to do justice to the time and effort that was put into these responses and, consequently, they have all been printed in full in the appendix.

3 Preliminary Discussion

The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather some evidence for whether there was appetite within the viticulture community for joining schemes that reward environmental land management. Despite the limitations of the questionnaire, the results provide clear evidence that there is a strong willingness to consider the schemes. Although only 41 vineyards responded, it is estimated that these respondents may represent approximately 20% of the land under vine in England. The respondents also represented a wide range of vineyard sizes from under 1 hectare to over 20 hectares.

Of those that responded, 93% would either 'possibly' or 'definitely or almost certainly' consider joining the environmental land management schemes. This high figure suggests that the fact that grapes are a high value crop would not deter people from becoming involved in schemes. Support¹ was strong for joining clusters (85%), maintaining continuous ground cover (85%), developing and maintaining species-rich grassland (93%) and wildlife friendly features (97%). Support for permissive access was considerably lower at 44% but this would still reflect a worthwhile take-up rate.

More research will need to be carried out to establish the attitude towards environmental land management schemes amongst grape growers that aren't self-selecting, but these preliminary results are very encouraging. Viticulturalists are keen to be paid for the environmental benefits that they provide and many were at pains to point out that they already do some of the things that are being proposed.

The appetite for the schemes was consistent across all sizes of vineyard and the motivations for being involved was revealing. A significant number of respondents cited working towards best environmental practice as a more important reason for being interested in the schemes than the payment rate.

The comments that some left after answering the questionnaire were especially useful to gain an insight into some of the issues that growers are considering when they think about environmental land management schemes. Some growers had already put in place species-rich grass sward with wildlife installations around the farm but hope they will not be penalised for already undertaking this practice. One respondent suggested that inter row plants may impact on yields though these plants can be established outside of the alleys in headlands and around the vineyard. This does, however, stress the importance of being able to apply the actions in a flexible way. There was a request for a help line for smaller growers and it is felt that the cluster action helps to addresses this.

One respondent mentioned that schemes must be consistent with good viticulture which is different from other soft fruit. Actions for viticulture have been proposed from consultation with farmers, land managers and viticulturalist as well as research across the globe and case studies. Row fruit growers have also been consulted on proposed row fruit actions and many of these align with the proposed actions for viticulture. The amount of paperwork required was mentioned by one respondent and some of the smaller vineyards would like to receive grants but up until now they have been excluded.

¹ Support in this paragraph relates to those that answered either 'possibly' or 'definitely or almost certainly' and these are the percentages given.

4 Appendix 1: Full results

The following are the results that were not able to be included in section 2.

5. What is the first part of your postcode?

NR21	PE9	CT3
SO24	TN26	CT4
TN6	GU4	LE12
RH20	RH20	BN6
CM23	ME13	TN6
RG7	CT4	NW5
GU3	RG27	TN30
TN32	NR21	TN18
CT4	YO26	TN12
TN26	Rh20	TN25
CT4	RG9	SN16
TN26	EX32	R17
RG9	RH20	CT18
TN5	RG20	

15. Do you have any comments about any of the questions you have been asked or any broader comments about how schemes that reward environmental benefits might apply to viticulture?

Comments
A help line for smaller growers
Your items in question 11, 12, 13 are already in place in our vineyards
Schemes must be consistent with good viticulture (which is different from other soft fruit farming). It would be sensible to canvas grape growers when establishing best practice.
Better to develop a programme applicable to vines that doesn't reduce yields through competition from other plants through inappropriate cover crops and recognises that cover crops have to be mown back during frost season.
We already use ground cover, insect habitats etc so would hope that there are benefits for both vineyards already using these practices and those that wish to convert (otherwise it effectively penalises those that start off as environmentally friendly or with a focus on soil health)
I already look after my land and the natural diversity thereon. More paperwork is unwelcome and unnecessary. Just reduce my tax. It's killing me!
Bio-security is an issue with public access as with hop wilt
We do many of the things talked about, but at present because we are under 5 hectares, we receive no grants! Is this going to continue?
I think we need to be clear about what is needed for the benefits, but make sure there is some flex in the system for high pest and diseases pressure events as well as maintaining economically sustainable crops.

The wine industry needs to work with DEFRA to create and Regenerative Viticultural Framework with proactive environmental and social action to address environmental collapse, climate change, soil degradation. Boosting and valuing workers with a Fair Pay Structure and improved benefits would go a long way too, as these are the people who will be carrying out farming practices and looking after the land. They are a key stakeholder.

The scheme should look at complete sustainability including soil viability. Soil cultivation has long been established as negative for soils, current IWM Praise work is looking at this. Vegetation under vines is detrimental to vine vigour. Allowing walkers access to vineyards is dangerous and unless liability laws are changed in tangent with this is unlikely to be viable for commercial vineyards. My thoughts are that it is better to grow 1ha intensively and manage 1ha purely for wildlife or manage, 2ha of semi-monocultured vines in a more extensive way.

It's very difficult to have a 'one size fits all' solution. We're unable to join Sustainable Wines of Great Britain because our wine is made by a non WineGB member. So however sustainable we are - and however sustainable they are - the scheme is inaccessible. Schemes need an element of flexibility.

I would like to increase access to the public but it wouldn't be safe or suitable to do that at any time. support to help improve access and visitor facilities would be very helpful as a muddy access isn't suitable all year. Any funding to help develop or improve educational opportunities too, e.g. signage or workshops. We have no access to mains water which limits opportunities so funding to develop Rainwater harvesting systems to provide water for spraying (rather than using residential water) would be helpful for the environment and the business. Support around equipment and safety to do with spraying requirements, e.g. funding for drainage or run off areas and a free collection of old pesticide containers and unused pesticides (amnesty) would help encourage farmers to abide by chemical regulations which I know is a hidden but significant environmental issue within arable farming.