

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

RURALEX: Experience walks 2026

### ***Invitation to Participate***

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the research is being carried out and what taking part will involve. Please read the information below carefully and feel free to ask questions.

### ***What is the purpose of the study?***

The research aims to understand how people experience rewilding landscapes. It explores how perceptions and values shape relationships with nature, place and ecological change.

Because successful environmental decision-making must engage with social and cultural needs, understanding how people really *feel* in these landscapes matters, but we currently lack methods to describe these often subtle dimensions of experience, which underpin attitudes and decisions.

### ***Background information***

This project forms part of the EU-funded programme [RURALEX](#) (2026-2028), which explores how rural knowledge is changing. In the UK, we are doing fieldwork at three sites in Sussex and Scotland, including Knepp.

Different forms of rewilding across the UK and EU are being adopted as a potentially scalable and cost-effective means to address climate change and biodiversity loss; they also signal a shift in relations with nature.

### ***Why have I been invited?***

You have been invited because you live near, work at, volunteer at, or visit Knepp, or because

you are a representative of a key associated organisation.

### ***Do I have to take part?***

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you agree to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep, and you will be asked to complete a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and you may request that your data is withdrawn up until the data is analysed (within 30 days).

### ***What will happen if I take part?***

If you choose to participate, you will be invited to an interview at the field site. This will involve a 'walking interview' at a relaxed pace to suit you with plenty of pauses, followed by an interview in situ. The total time spent with the researcher on the day will be between 90 minutes and two hours.

The interview will be audio-recorded, and in some cases video-recorded, but only with your permission. You will be asked about how you experience the landscape through sound, movement, atmosphere, memory and other sensory details.

After the interview, you will be invited to a short online survey inviting further reflection and feedback. Your opinion will help us to develop and refine this methodology. It will also ask if you are interested in contributing to co-creative aspects of this research later on.

Those who are interested will be invited to a two-hour focus group. This is optional. It will explore emerging themes from the research, and possible creative outcomes to share with future decision-makers.

You can exit the focus group at any point, without giving any reason. Because of the nature of

focus groups, it is not possible for us to withdraw your data once it has been given.

### ***Are there any disadvantages or risks?***

The main cost to you is your time. Some conversations may involve reflection on environmental change, which can be occasionally sensitive. You are always free to skip questions, take a break or stop the session.

### ***What are the potential benefits?***

Many people enjoy the opportunity to reflect on their connection with place, nature and change. Findings may help support more inclusive dialogue and decision-making around nature restoration and environmental decision making.

### ***Will my information be kept confidential?***

All personal data will be kept securely and held in accordance with data protection legislation.

**We will maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity and will not reveal the identity of any participant, nor any information which may lead to their identification, without obtaining clear informed, explicit prior consent.**

Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored securely on University of Sussex systems. Data will be retained and managed in line with University policy and may be anonymised for long-term deposit in a research repository.

### ***What should I do if I want to take part?***

You will receive a link to an online form, inviting you to sign up for an interview time. You can also indicate your availability for the focus group. If you would like to ask questions, please contact:

Lucy Sabin, University of Sussex  
Email: [ls763@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:ls763@sussex.ac.uk)

### ***What will happen to the results?***

Results will be used for academic publications, presentations, reports and creative outputs where relevant, and where informed consent is given by the research participant.

Participants can request a summary of findings, and publicly shared outputs will be made accessible online or by email.

### ***Who is organising and funding the research?***

This study is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) via European Union consortia (HERA CHANSE) and conducted by the University of Sussex, in the Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities.

### ***Who has reviewed this study?***

This research has been approved by the University of Sussex Research Ethics Committee. Ethics reference number: 910.

### ***Further Information and Contacts***

If you have concerns or questions about this project, please contact:

Alice Eldridge  
[alicee@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:alicee@sussex.ac.uk)

You may also contact the Chair of the Faculty of Media, Arts & Humanities Research Ethics Committee at:

[frecmah@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:frecmah@sussex.ac.uk)

*The University of Sussex has insurance in place covering its legal liabilities for this study.*

*Thank you for taking time to review this Information Sheet.*