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THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF THE MOOR TREES PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

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**THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE:
THE CASE OF THE MOOR TREES PARTNERSHIP NETWORK**

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences
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ABSTRACT

Clive Bastin

The Partnership Approach to Environmental Governance: the Case of the Moor Trees Partnership Network.

Academic discussion of policy-making and governing indicates a significant shift in the model of governance away from top-down state control to the bottom-up approach of engaging non-state actors (Goodwin and Painter, 1996; Jessop, 1998; Stoker, 1993, 1998). Central to governance theory are new forms of policy organisation, in effect, a shift from state monopoly of decision-making towards partnering with non-state (and, therefore, non-elected) actors for the formulation and delivery of sustainability objectives. It is argued that these partnerships are a key aspect of governance, which, in turn has become one of the main themes in environmental politics (Imrie and Raco, 1999; MacKinnon, 2000; Goodwin and Painter, 1996; Stoker, 1998). In part, the growing prominence of environmental partnership-working is a recognition that sustainability cannot be achieved through top-down government, but requires the active involvement of a broad range of non-state stakeholder groups spanning all sections of society to ensure that sustainability strategies are context-oriented and meet the needs of local populations. This study refers to these objectives as 'environmental plans, policies and programmes' (EPPP).

I suggest that contemporary academic debate is lacking in conceptual and empirical focus on partnership-working as a *delivery mechanism* for environmental governance. This thesis aims to address this gap by; (i) assessing the implications of the state's devolution of responsibility for the delivery of EPPP to the community level; (ii) investigating the democratic legitimacy of these non-state actors; (iii) appraising the financial and operational accountability of state-non-state partnerships; and (iv) furthering the understanding of the practical issues that environmental partnership-working must address in order to become an effective delivery vehicle for environmental policy objectives.

In meeting these objectives, this thesis has conceptualised the formulation and delivery of EPPP via the Policy Implementation Continuum. The continuum is stratified into four sectors: 'state', 'QUANGO', 'third', and 'private'. I argue that the success of these partnerships revolves on actors from across all four layers meeting the three requirements of; (i) accepting responsibility, (ii) acquiring legitimacy, and (iii) providing accountability. To this end, I argue that these three constructs are critical components of the Effective Partnership-working model. I argue that, without achieving all three, partnerships cannot work effectively and that the implementation gap between policy and practice will remain.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A2N	Access to Nature
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BLF	Big Lottery Fund
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EPPP	Environmental Plans, Policies and Programmes
FCR	Full Cost Recovery
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
JI	Joint Implementation Mechanism
MTPN	Moor Trees Partnership Network
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPEP	Offender Pathway to Employment Programme
PPP	Policies, Plans & Programmes
QUANGO	Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation
WCT	Will Charitable Trust
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

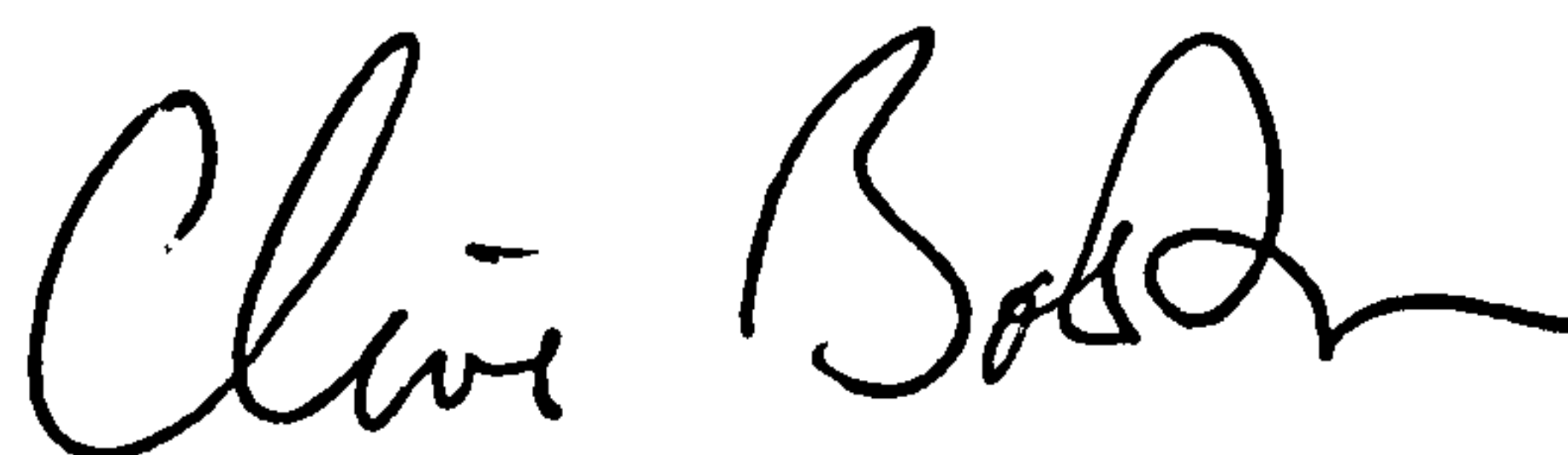
At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

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Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clive Boden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Date:

07.07.10.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Conceptualising the Partnership Approach to Environmental Governance

Much discussion of policy-making and governing indicates a significant shift in the model of governance away from top-down state control to the bottom-up partnership approach of engaging non-state actors (Goodwin and Painter, 1996; Jessop, 1998; Stoker, 1993, 1998). Governance was defined by the Commission on Global Governance, (1995, in Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2009:42) as:

‘...the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest’.

Stoker (1998:17) concurred that governance brings together public and private actors, when arguing that ‘governance refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within the public and private sectors have become blurred’. Goodwin and Painter (1996:636) also argued that:

‘Governance is central government, a range of non-elected organisations of the state (at both central and local levels) as well as institutional and individual actors from outside the formal political arena, such as voluntary organisations private businesses and corporations, the mass media and, increasingly, supra-national institutions such as the European Union.’

Central to governance theory are new forms of policy organisation, in effect a shift from state monopoly of decision-making towards closer cooperation with non-state actors in the formulation and implementation of sustainability objectives. The argument that governance represents a 'shift' is also supported by Rhodes (1997), who asserted that it is a changed condition of ordered rule or a new method by which society is governed. Stoker (1997) argued that because governance is about government, NGOs, community groups and private citizens working in partnership, community involvement can be regarded as a key aspect of governance. Thus, governance has become one of the main themes in environmental politics, as governments devolve many environmental responsibilities towards grassroots actors and contract out services and activities to private (non-elected) actors (Imrie and Raco, 1999; MacKinnon, 2000; Goodwin and Painter, 1996; Stoker, 1998). Local knowledge, territorial identity (localness), collective learning and increased discourse through improved communication channels are offered as further reasons for the governance approach (Evans, 2004). This partnering between state and non-state actors for service delivery and strategic decision-making draws further attention to the governance concept, with cross-sector partnerships now increasingly becoming normal practice (Day, 1998; Goodwin, 1998). In this context, partnership-working is increasingly seen as an indispensable part of the transition towards meeting sustainability objectives.

In part, their growing prominence can be read as a recognition that sustainability cannot be achieved through top-down government but requires the active involvement of a broad range of non-state stakeholder groups spanning all sections of society in order to ensure that sustainability strategies are context-oriented, and meet the needs of local populations. These new 'environmental partnerships' were first brought to the attention of international policy-makers and commentators via the 'local approach' of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, where partnership-working under-pinned many approaches to environmental issues and set out the Local Agenda 21 framework for environmental governance to implement global aims through

national, regional and local policies (Evans, 2004; Mackinnon, 2002; Mert, 2009; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Sampford, 2002; Savan *et al.*, 2004; Vogler, 2005). This study has contextualised these objectives by referring to 'environmental plans, policies and programmes' (EPPP).

The importance of partnerships gained further expression in the adaptation of Type 2 outcomes at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 (Evans 2004, Mackinnon 2002, Sampford 2002, Raco *et al.*, 2006). These partnerships were announced at the summit by the United Nations, who invited them to register with the secretariat of the Commission for Sustainable Development, a sub-committee of the UN Economic and Social Council. Sampford (2002:81) argued that for this trans-boundary governance concept to be effective, a multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary approach is required, with Mackinnon (2002) further supporting the broader neoliberal strategy of community involvement and empowerment, or, governing through community. In furthering the neoliberalist discussion, Boonstra (2006:303) more recently argued that 'Neoliberalism, which transferred responsibility for public issues from the state to individuals and companies, became a popular response to these governmental problems'.

Placing this discussion into the UK context, in 1997, New Labour promoted partnerships as their approach to governance in health, social care and regeneration (Ranade and Hudson, 1999). This was subsequently formalised via UK Government White Papers promoting 'self help' and 'active citizenship'. Goodwin (1998) explored this approach as the interface between the market-led economy and a redistributive social policy which was underpinned by Foucauldian governmentality theory of the liberalist governing 'through communities' as opposed to society (see also Raco *et al.*, (2006) and Ward and McNicholas (1998:37)). The Rural White paper of 2000 reinforced the state's commitment to 'People living in rural areas being fully involved in developing their community, safeguarding its valued features and shaping the decisions that affect them', and that 'a healthy voluntary and community sector is

essential to the effective functioning of society - urban and rural.' The UK has subsequently seen a shift in support policies from a sectoral approach to one that is territorial¹ and runs through local authorities and regional strategies (Scott, 2004; Hodge, 2001). With an increasing focus on the environment, there is now a more multi-dimensional approach to issues such as community networks, environmentalism, sustainability and micro-business investment aiming at stimulating a significant reappraisal of environmental resources (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Sampford, 2002; Scott, 2004). These processes sit within the conceptual framework of building the capacity of communities and improving links with local economies where the state partners with non-state actors (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Yarwood, 2002; Scott, 2004; Stoker, 1998).

This governance approach is subject to extensive debate, but consideration should also be given to the state's continued desire to shape, monitor and steer local authority practice through a distinct set of managerial technologies, including budgetary management, audit and targets (Mackinnon, 2000; Thompson, 2005). This was argued by Hodge (2001:107) as 'the institutional and financial environment created by government' (see also Thompson, 2005). Conceptualised by Mackinnon (2000 and 2002) as 'managerial technologies', this arguably dilutes the idea of participatory democracy, as stakeholders are still subject to constraints and processes designed to control outcomes and guide delivery and still have limited resources that restrict effective engagement (Day, 1998; Scott, 2004; Wilson, 2004). This re-working of environmental governance to include previously marginalised actors is an important political and intellectual debate that also revolves around Liverman's (2004) commodification of nature. Various factors are attributed to this theory, including the neoliberal policies of state de-regulation, budget cuts, privatisation and decentralisation, social activism and technocentrism (Bailey and Wilson, 2009; Higgins and Lockie, 2002; Liverman, 2004; Mackinnon, 2002; Mol, 2006; Sonnenfeld and Mol, 2002). It is suggested that partnerships have become

¹ The implementation of local development programmes geared to local requirements.

key to the successful implementation and management of environmental governance. The focus of this study is the exploration of this argument, including the conceptualisation of partnerships as a subset of the environmental governance paradigm. Particular attention is paid to the themes of *responsibility*, *legitimacy* and *accountability* of non-elected actors funded by public sector money but often considered to be lacking in auditing and review procedures that are suitable to the non-state actor context (Hodge, 2001:107; Goodwin, 1998; Shortall, 2004; Stoker, 1998:20; O'Toole and Burdess, 2004).

Partnerships are defined as an arrangement existing between two or more organisations working towards a defined goal and are deemed essential for the development of collaborative advantages when seeking to solve environmental problems (Darlow and Newby, 1997; Huxham, 1996; Healy, 1992). In terms of governance, the ultimate partnership activity is the formation of self-governing networks including state and non-state actors that will influence policy, play a role in governing and facilitate the delivery of programmes (Goodwin, 1998; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998). To begin to place partnerships into the environmental context, Bennet and Krebs (1991) and Scott (2004) discussed the bringing together of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors to work towards a common end. Worthington *et al.* (2003) further highlighted the need for cross-sector partnerships to address complex environmental issues. Partnerships, however, although historically operating on an informal or commercial basis, now increasingly feature in more formal political and governing frameworks. As such, these relationships are coming under increased pressure regarding their democratic legitimacy.

There is little doubt that governance is radically changing the boundaries between state and non-state actors. I assert, however, that its expression in the form of partnership-working raises a number of questions regarding the democratic legitimacy of state-devolved responsibility for EPPP delivery, the representativeness of the non-state actor partnerships,

and the robustness and appropriateness of associated financial and operational accountability mechanisms. At its most fundamental, sound environmental governance depends on effective regulation and due regard for the rule of law (Turner, 2006). O'Toole and Burdess (2004:441) argued that, unlike local government, community groups 'do not possess the vital factors of legitimacy, accountability and assured sources of long-term funding'. These questions surrounding partnership legitimacy and effectiveness are further considered by authors such as Connelly *et al.* (2006), Eden *et al.* (2006), Jepson (2005), Liverman (2004), O'Toole *et al.* (2004), Raco *et al.* (2006) and Yarwood (2002). Legitimacy is a key debate regarding governance and accountability as it is a multi-faceted concept that operates differently in different contexts. It is also unclear how it is to be understood now that the criteria appropriate to a representative democracy is not applicable to non-elected actors (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Jepson, 2005). Whilst adopted in an attempt to broaden policy engagement, doubts also arise around the intra-network power dynamic, with partnership inclusiveness and effectiveness affected as certain stakeholders are intentionally excluded and therefore subject to selective inclusivity (see Evans, 2004 and Yarwood, 2002). If such norms are to become accepted principles for legitimate rural governance, then more work is needed to establish the acceptability of governance by the wider population and the capacity for democratic deficit that is evident in poorly constructed governance and partnership frameworks (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Hutchinson, 1994; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Ranade and Hudson, 2003).

When considering the issues of legitimacy it is also important to consider the concept of *responsibility* (Savan *et al.*, 2004; Stoker, 1998; Raco *et al.*, 2006). It could be argued that a weakness in the governance approach is the dilution of care, liability, accountability and responsiveness as power moves from the state to new multi-actor, cross-sector networks. This is especially relevant at community level where funding streams support independent (non-elected) groups in the delivery of sustainable development objectives (O'Toole and Burdess, 2004; Ward and McNicholas, 1998). The implications of self-governing autonomous networks'

accountability has become an important issue, with it being theorised that each sector of society should be characterised by a distinct accountability regime (Jepson, 2005; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1998; Turner 2006). The governance concept can then be applied to maintain and strengthen these legitimacy claims by establishing and over-seeing accountability streams that recognise that public trust is built on the cumulative evidence of legitimacy (Jepson, 2005). This study conceptualised three types of accountability - *hierarchical, holistic, and zero* - which are analysed in Chapter 7.

Having introduced the concepts of environmental governance and partnerships, I now briefly present how they are used for the operationalisation of environmental sustainability objectives. Environmental governance and partnerships are increasingly linked to the delivery of sustainable development objectives through the creation of the third sector (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Vogler, 2005). The third sector, also known as 'The Voluntary and Community sector', is subject to various state experiments that challenge existing decision-making structures to operationalise the concepts of sustainable development. In part, this is due to the perceived state-centric failure to deliver Elkington's (1997) 'triple bottom line' of economic, social and environmental sustainability (see also, amongst others, Dryzek, 1997; Lawrence, 2006). In this new approach to EPPP formulation and delivery, the use of managerial technologies to steer and control non-state partnerships (established within the third sector) is also seen as an evolving ecological modernisation paradigm. I highlight this evolution as an important concept within this study, with the paradigm shift by the state towards the economic feasibility of environmental protection and the engagement of 'entrepreneurial agents and economic / market dynamics, and the building of new and different coalitions to make environmental protection politically feasible' (Fisher and Freudenburg, 2001:703). These new coalitions refer to the partnerships that are argued to present a greater chance of success against environmental challenges due to the pooling of strengths and skills and the merging of audiences to increase the appeal of potential solutions (Edwards *et al.*, 2000; Hutchinson,

1994; Stoker, 1993). The structure, functionality and efficacy of these partnerships are the focus of this study. By conceptualising the Policy Implementation Continuum (see Section 3.3.1), I explore how actors from the public, Quasi Non-Governmental Organisation (QUANGO), third and private sectors work in partnership to formulate and deliver EPPP. The empirical focus analyses the opportunities and challenges of local knowledge, the synergies of collaborative-working, the power structures resulting from 'partnership principals' and state interference, and the representativeness of these partnerships. To conclude the conceptual background to this study, I now consider the applied side of these theoretical approaches by briefly discussing the empirical focus for this thesis.

I assumed the role of researcher-practitioner throughout this study. As a researcher, I studied the partnership approach to environmental governance. As a practitioner, I worked as a Director of Moor Trees, a small environmental charity based in the South West of England working on the restoration of native broadleaved woodland in and around Dartmoor National Park. My dual status presented the opportunity for the study of Moor Trees as an environmental actor, plus its associated partnership network, collectively referred to in this study as the 'Moor Trees Partnership Network', or, the 'MTPN' (see Section 4.6). The network included approximately 400 actors from across all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum. These actors played various roles in the formulation and delivery of EPPP, which, collectively, I considered to be representative of the wider environmental sector. Thus, the MTPN formed the over-arching case study for this research. I also focused on a number of case studies from within the network. Particular focus was given to the Moor Trees Voluntary Carbon Offset Programme (see Section 4.8) as a market-based approach to environmentalism that engaged previously marginalised actors, especially the private sector (Goodwin, 1998; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Stoker, 1998).

It is argued by some that the private sector is responding to the demands of sustainable development (Muller, 2006; Smith, 2003; Wilenius, 2004; Liverman, 2004). Consumer demand and reputational risk require corporate responsibility, triple-bottom line accounting and market re-positioning. Companies actively addressing these issues, often by working with Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) partners, can gain significant market advantages over less-concerned competitors (Clark and Hebb, 2005; Liverman, 2004; Smith, 2003; Wilenius, 2004). This has led to a growing philosophy within the green sector that, to influence and facilitate change, it is better to work within 'the system' than against it, and that the market-based approach is increasingly beneficial for managing and protecting the environment (Liverman, 2004; Slavikova *et al.*, 2010). To explore this engagement of business with the environment, the (unregulated) voluntary carbon markets provided an interesting case study, especially regarding the themes of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability. 'Carbon offsetting' was originally introduced as a market-based instrument by the Kyoto Protocol.

The voluntary carbon markets provide an interesting example of an entrepreneurial interpretation of the original Kyoto mechanism. Being non-statutory and with no tangible product or service purchased, 'going carbon neutral' is increasingly used by state and non-state actors alike (though predominantly the private sector) in response to increasing ethical consumerism and stakeholder pressures. Initial refusals to commit to meaningful action on climate change was historically justified in terms of the potential ensuing economic damage² of legally binding emissions targets, but committing to climate change action via the voluntary market is increasingly used for public relations and corporate responsibility purposes. This market exists for reasons other than regulatory compliance, so is unregulated and presents issues regarding accountability and legitimacy.

² Loss of competitiveness, price increases, and unemployment

1.2 The Knowledge Gap

Existing research has examined the governance concept in considerable detail, the reasons for this new approach to governing, and the various forms of network developed at international, national and local level to develop and oversee the delivery of policy goals. Texts by authors including Goodwin and Painter (1996) discuss non-elected actor networks, government, community groups and supra-national institutions such as the European Union. Rhodes (1997) argued that governance changes the conditions for ordered rule and Stoker (1997, 1998) discussed the five propositions of governance (see Table 2.1) and the associated blurring of public and private sector boundaries. These authors placed their discussions around the broader concept of governance, with Goodwin and Painter (1996), Imrie and Raco (1999) and Mackinnon (2000) further discussing the contracting-out of local services and programmes to private (non-elected) actors. The rising profile of sustainable development in the 1990s also brought a new focus for governance literature on environmental issues. Authors such as Stoker (1994, 1997), Goodwin (1998) and Sampford (2002) discussed the community-based approach ('governing through community'), including the continuation of the state as a central actor through managerial technologies, QUANGOs and governance issues resulting from the lack of participatory democracy (see also Mackinnon, 2000). Governance, therefore, (and, more specifically, environmental governance) is well-researched by a range of social science authors.

With regard to partnerships, Huxham (1996), Hastings (1996) and Stoker (1998) have discussed public-private sector partnerships as becoming a new norm for public service delivery. Darlow and Newby (1997), Pratt *et al.* (1998) and Tilson *et al.* (1997) have also encouraged further debate around the structure and value of partnerships for the delivery of environmental objectives. Partnerships develop social capital and engage in community-based sustainable development. It has also been argued by Edwards *et al.* (2001) that the merging of public, private and voluntary sectors can leverage resources to yield outputs greater than the sum of

its parts and, subsequently, endogenous development³. From this, further scholarship by Eden *et al.* (2006) (who discuss NGOs' and stakeholder scientific legitimacy) and Evans (2004) (who argued that the local approach creates path dependency where local knowledge and expertise used to formulate plans are then essential for delivery) has explored the role of partnerships as a specific expression of the governance approach. These arguments all stem from the notion that governments do not hold the monopoly of knowledge and implementation expertise for successful programme delivery, an idea further discussed by Goodwin (1998) who contended that no single actor holds these attributes. Partnerships are also seen as contributing to the rescaling of governance through the redistribution of power to the local or community level. An idea that has brought new scholarly contributions is the idea of environmental and sustainable development partnerships (Stoker, 1993; Hutchinson, 1994), recognising the limitations in top-down government in dealing with sustainability issues in a way that gives adequate recognition to the need for stakeholder legitimation and involvement in the local sustainability strategies (Dryzek, 1997; Edwards *et al.*, 2000).

Partnerships are often considered in the same discussions as the 'hollowing out of the state', where powers and responsibilities are taken away from the state and invested in the public, private and voluntary sectors. State managerial technologies, however, are argued to still exist to initiate, structure, finance and regulate these new partnerships (Edwards *et al.*, 2001; Imrie and Raco, 1999; Mackinnon, 2000). With a cross-over into governance discussions and research by, amongst others, Rhodes (1996), Goodwin (1998) and Marsden and Murdoch (1998), more recent papers (Sorenson, 2005; Connelly *et al.*, 2006) focus on identifying; (i) the various types of partnerships formed; (ii) key prerequisites for the effective functioning of partnerships, and (iii) critiques of partnerships in practice.

³ Growth affected by (social) behaviour as well as policy, or, an integrated 'bottom-up' approach involving local actors and communities (Mackinnon, 2002:307).

Although partnerships are well recognised as an important and necessary part of the broadening out of government to governance, it has been argued that this redistribution of power and the emergence of non-elected local governance raises the issues of democracy, inclusivity, legitimacy, accountability and responsibility (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Goodwin, 1998; Imrie and Raco, 1999). Specific literature is, however, lacking on these issues in the context of the environment and sustainability strategies. Additionally, the related issues of selective inclusivity (Yarwood, 2002; Evans, 2004) and democratic deficit (Hutchinson, 1994; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Ranade and Hudson, 2003; Connelly *et al.*, 2006) have also received some review. These papers do provide some details, few explicitly address these issues and no real detail (or empirical focus) exists in the governance and partnership context. This thesis aims to contribute to this gap in existing knowledge through qualitative and quantitative research.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to consider the partnership approach in environmental governance by using the case study of the MTPN. In order to address this aim, the study has the following four objectives:

- Using the MTPN as a case study, to analyse whether and to what extent the state is devolving responsibility and authority for environmental decision-making and the delivery of EPPP to the non-state, or grassroots, actor level through discourses of community responsibility, partnership-working and self-governing.
- To assess if democratic legitimacy is lost through the inclusion of non-elected, non-state actors in the formulation and delivery of EPPP.
- To explore the financial and operational accountability framework(s) of the MTPN and to analyse the implications of quantitative and qualitative reporting mechanisms.

- To critically assess the Moor Trees Partnership Network to further the understanding of the practical issues that environmental partnerships must address in order to become effective delivery vehicles for EPPP.

1.4 Structure of Thesis

To meet these aims and objectives, Chapter 2 reviews the existing body of knowledge on governance, partnerships, responsibility, legitimacy, accountability and the voluntary carbon offset sector. Chapter 3 discusses the multi-method approach that was used for the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter 4 reviews the Moor Trees Partnership Network, which formed the over-arching empirical focus of this study, and from where mini-case studies were also drawn. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 discuss the themes of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability respectively, with their empirical findings and conclusions then contributing to Chapter 8's analysis and discussion of partnership-working. Chapter 9 forms the conclusion to this study, including directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Exploring Environmental Governance and Partnerships

Part 2 of this thesis reviews existing research on partnerships and governance in order to contextualise their role and issues in relation to local environmental management. The discussion focuses on the rise of the partnership approach and examines the issues of responsibility, legitimacy, democratic deficit and accountability that form the basis of the current study.

Section 2.1 reviews existing knowledge on governance and its increasing profile as an approach to sustainable development. This sets the scene on how new actors and processes are drawn into the governing of local sustainability strategies. Section 2.2 then reviews partnerships as a tool for delivering more context-specific governance. It begins by introducing partnerships and discussing their use for the formulation and implementation of EPPP. Public-private partnerships are then further discussed in relation to Agenda 21 and their increasing profile in the WSSD agenda. The section concludes by reviewing the benefits and key characteristics of partnerships, focusing on community involvement and the contracting-out of public services. Section 2.3 explores the concept of governance as a theoretical framework for analysing how environmental partnerships are used to include previously marginalised non-state actors in the formulation and delivery of EPPP. Section 2.3.1 provides a background on the origins and formulation of partnerships and also considers the critical issues facing these multi-actor and often complex networks in the environmental context. It also considers the constraints imposed on partnerships by government control through the monitoring, review and auditing processes in place as a result of state funding conditions. Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4 and 2.3.5 focus on responsibility, legitimacy, democratic deficit and accountability, individually identified as key issues by Connelly *et al.* (2006), Eden *et al.* (2006), Hodge (2001), Jepson (2005), O'Toole and Burdess (2004), Turner, (2006) and Yarwood (2002) but as yet, I suggest, not explored as a whole in sufficient empirical depth. Finally, Section 2.4 reviews the

key challenges for environmental governance raised by the increasing prominence of partnership activities and the way partnership-working deals with the issues of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability. It then brings the main threads of environmental governance and partnerships together and summarises the key findings along with gaps in existing knowledge and the opportunities for further research.

2.1 Governance in the Environmental Context

Stoker (1997:10) defines the shift from government to governance as:

‘Government is used to refer to the formal institutional structure and location of authoritative decision-making in the modern state. The concept of governance is wider and directs attention to the distribution of power both internal and external to the state. Its focus is on the interdependence of governmental and non-governmental forces in meeting economic and social challenges. Governance is about governmental and non-governmental organisations working together. Its concern is with how the challenge of collective action is met and the issues and tensions associated with this shift in the pattern of governing’.

This definition, although originally discussed in the economic and social context, provides the conceptual framework within which this study has situated environmental partnership-working. Stoker’s argument regarding the ‘interdependence of governmental and non-governmental forces’, in particular, is a constant thread throughout this thesis, with multiple references to ‘state’ (governmental) and ‘non-state’ (non-governmental) actors. The ‘distribution of power’ is also examined more closely in Section 2.3.4, as part of the democratic deficit discussion. Stoker (1998) added that governance, as a new process of governing, is ultimately concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action and its

outputs are, therefore, the same as government. He further argued that, despite varying scholarly contributions, there appeared to be a baseline agreement that governance refers to the development of governing styles leading to the ‘blurring’ of public / private sector boundaries (see also Ferguson, 2010; Logan and Wekerle, 2008). Whilst I concur that this ‘blurring’ is indeed a result of state / non-state interaction, I suggest that this concept has, as yet, been given little empirical focus regarding its operationalisation. Indeed, my concluding comments in this UK-based study suggest an alternative construct where the state has ‘thickened’ its boundaries to extend its influence, thus contending with Stoker’s arguments regarding distribution of power.

Proposition	Critical Issue
1. Governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government.	There is a divorce between the complex reality of decision-making associated with governance and the normative codes used to explain and justify government.
2. Governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.	The blurring of responsibilities can lead to blame avoidance or scape-goating.
3. Governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action.	Power dependence exacerbates the problem of unintended consequences for government.
4. Governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors.	The emergence of self-governing networks raises difficulties over accountability.
5. Governance recognises the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide.	Even where governments operate in a flexible way to steer collective action governance failure may occur.

Table 2.1: The Five Propositions of Governance (Stoker, 1998:18)

Stoker’s (1998) seminal paper ‘Governance as theory: five propositions’, presents five propositions of governance, which provide the five ‘pillars’ of a governance framework. Whilst governance theory implies a more inclusive, ‘bottom up’ approach to EPPP formulation and delivery, the reality is that each proposition has its own critical issue (or dilemma). These

issues form the key discussion throughout this study, with the EPPP providing the context, and the MTPN the empirical focus.

Jessop (1998:29), meanwhile, whilst initially offering the very broad definition that governance can 'refer to any mode of co-ordination of inter-dependent activities', also referred to governance as a 'heterarchical structure, with various forms including self-organising interpersonal networks, negotiated inter-organisational co-ordination and decentred, context-mediated, inter-systemic steering'. His comment regarding 'heterarchical structures', in particular, is explored in Chapter 5, where it is suggested that the state is paradoxically devolving responsibility whilst at the same time retaining a hierarchical framework through Yarwood's (2002:289) 'government from a distance' (see also Raco and Imrie, 2000). These definitions do, however, carry the similar thread to Stoker (1997, 1998) by arguing that governance aims towards a multi-stakeholder model, through the formation of networks and / or partnerships and new inter-sectoral relationships. Hanberger (2009), also highlighted the *multi-actor model*, a model which he argues is governance through networks and communities i.e. where public actors and institutions join networks and partnerships in order to resolve pressing problems and challenges.

Jessop (1998:29) also argued that governance had 'only recently entered the standard anglophone social science lexicon and become a 'buzzword' in various lay circles', and that 'even now social scientific usages are often 'pre-theoretical' and eclectic; and lay usages are just as diverse and contrary'. However, Mackinnon (2000, 2002) argued that in the UK it was the Conservative reforms of the 1980s that started the transition from local government to local governance (or 'hierarchical' to 'network' governance (see Table 2.2)). This was operationalised, Mackinnon argued, through the establishment of (non-elected) QUANGOs, the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering, and the increasing number of private and voluntary agencies in programme delivery. Although 1980s government rhetoric promoted

decentralisation and community involvement, this move from government to governing was also argued to be a product of neoliberalism and, as such, clarified the relationship between neoliberalism and governance. It is argued by some that neoliberalism, in this context, is the creation of a free market which will protect nature better than environmental regulation through individual decision-making and the creation of new markets for environmental services (Pennington, 2005; Slavikova *et al.*, 2010). The definition of neoliberalism *per se*, however, remains a deeply contested subject, though Polanyi's (1944) reference to the 'self-regulating market' appears to hold credence with many. Within his analysis of the term, he presents a market that is 'increasingly wide in its geographic scope, comprehensive as the governing mechanism for allocating all goods and services, and central as a metaphor for organising and evaluating institutional performance' (Polanyi, 1994, in McCarthy and Prudham, 2003). More recently, Burchell (1996) defined neoliberalism as constructing the conditions for enterprise and competition to flourish, whilst Castree (2009) argued that neoliberalism contains *marketisation* and *privatisation* as key criteria, whilst also arguing that 'empirically, it is no surprise to discover that, however defined, 'neoliberalism' does not 'ground itself unchanged from place to place' (Castree, 2006:1). Indeed, McCarthy and Prudham (2003:275) also argued that 'connections between neoliberalism, environmental change, and environmental politics remain under-explored in critical scholarship'.

The Conservative neoliberalist agenda of the 1980s and early 1990s, however, was considered by the likes of Jessop (1997) and Goodwin (1998) to yield little benefit. They argued that if left to its own devices, the market cannot guarantee economic or social development. Hodge (2001:103) also argued that development challenges cannot be dealt with through 'free market environmentalism' and that, although a market framework offers a variety of advantages, the absence of government support means that 'private organisations fail to represent the full range of public interests and most only operate with substantial government support'. Goodwin (1998:5) concurred, when arguing that the debate had 'shifted from

whether old-style public intervention is better than the free market, or vice versa, to one in which the major questions now concern the ways in which state and market can be integrated to provide the most effective co-ordination’.

	Market	Hierarchy	Network
<i>Normative Basis</i>	Contract – Property rights	Employment Relationship	Complementary strengths
<i>Communication means</i>	Prices	Routines	Relational
<i>Conflict Resolution</i>	Haggling / Courts	Supervision (flat)	Reputational concerns
<i>Degree of flexibility</i>	High	Low	Medium
<i>Commitment</i>	Low	Medium	High
<i>Tone or climate</i>	Precision / suspicion	Formal / bureaucratic	Open-ended, mutual benefits
<i>Actor choice</i>	Independent	Dependent	Interdependent

Table 2.2: Modes of Governance (Adapted from Powell in Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998)

The argument for and against neoliberalism is further explored throughout this thesis. Section 5.3, in particular, explores the third sector resource deficit and the market-based approaches that are increasingly adopted by some sector actors (see also Liverman’s (2004) discussion regarding the commodification of nature).

New Labour subsequently came into power in 1997, with their ‘Third Way’ agenda (see Section 2.2 for further review) attempting to fuse a market-led economy with a redistributive social policy based on restoring social cohesion, social justice and the values of local community (Goodwin, 1998; Pearce and Mawson, 2003; Taylor, 2007). This new agenda presented partnership-working as integral to New Labour’s politics by seeking to reduce bureaucracy and the inequity of market solutions (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). Thus, partnerships aimed to merge the resources and competencies of state and non-state actors (including public, private and voluntary sectors). These new approaches to economic and social development were subsequently labelled as the new structures of governance (Jessop, 1997). The primary focus

was on community involvement which, traditionally nested within the context of neighbourhood renewal, was now the focus for a modernising government and the promotion of democratic renewal through broadening citizen engagement and devolving decision-making to local communities (Pearce and Mawson, 2003). Pearce and Mawson (2003:54) listed the following eight potential outcomes of the devolved approach as contributing to delivering the government's agenda:

1. Establishing the needs, priorities and aspirations of key players and individuals and ensuring that solutions are designed to accommodate local needs;
2. Building community capacity by promoting community participation, commitment and leadership;
3. Enhancing and legitimising the role of local elected members;
4. Encouraging continuous innovation in services, through joined-up working and community involvement;
5. Developing the enabling role of local authorities by attracting the involvement of local stakeholders in area-wide strategic and local partnerships;
6. Providing a territorial focus for cross-cutting measures;
7. Focusing local authority main programmes and budgets on neighbourhood priorities;
and
8. Developing evaluation frameworks to assess practice and mechanisms for exchanging best practice.

In the environmental context, the past three decades have seen a shift in the general approach to the management of environmental issues. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972) first introduced the notion 'that international progress on strictly environmental issues requires the incorporation of development concerns' (Vogler, 2005:844), a concept further highlighted in 1992 by the introduction of Local Agenda 21 that aimed to

make Sustainable Development a priority for the 21st century (Gibbs and Jonas, 2000). The WSSD and discussions in the Global Ministerial Environmental Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also made specific references to environmental governance (Vogler, 2002). These three events reflected the broader move from governmental approaches to pollution control to the inclusion of the developing world as trans-boundary issues became apparent and the ideas of the precautionary approach and sustainable development were first mooted. These moves by the international community to address the increasingly complex nature of environmental problems, Meadowcroft (2000:175) argued:

‘...reflect change in the prevailing management paradigm as a re-conceptualisation of the scales at which environmental problems (and potential solutions) are to be approached. From the vantage point of the later understanding, it appears that on each dimension there has been movement from a narrow or partial view to a broader a more comprehensive vision: from some countries to all countries; from naive self-confidence to a more mature appreciation of complexity; from reliance on a single dedicated ministry to insistence on all ministries; from clean-up to prevention; from almost exclusive dependence on regulation to a balanced portfolio including negotiation and tax-based instruments; from national responsibility to international collaboration; and so on’.

Rauschmayer *et al.* (2009:43) also argued that ‘Environmental issues are typically characterised by physical and social complexity, uncertainty, large temporal and spatial scales, and irreversibility’. These arguments highlight the necessity for the global move towards a more inclusive form of governing due to the trans-boundary and increasingly complex nature of environmental issues. In its most basic sense, no one government has the authority to instigate global policy and, as such, lead actors are forced into a more embracing style of governing through partnership development and international collaboration. Having recognised the need

for a global approach to governing the environment, the issues of collaboration, multi-actor responsibilities and negotiated instruments all firmly relate to the paradigm shift of environmental governance towards increased stakeholder engagement and the community-based approach. The Rio Earth Summit aimed to 'implement global aims through a set of scaled national, regional and local policies for action' that increasingly require multi-actor collaboration and scaled local governance (Evans, 2004:270). This initiative aimed to bring the global environmental agenda to the local level. Broadly speaking, it aimed to do this by firmly introducing the concept of environmental governance to the political stage through the inclusivity, responsiveness and partnership rhetoric of local governance. Sampford (2002:79) argued that this bottom-up approach reflected an increasing value placed on local knowledge and the idea that environmental governance is about involving and implementing human solutions '...through values, institutions and practices. Finding those solutions and implementing them are the challenges of environmental governance'.

It is argued by Rauschmayer *et al.* (2009:44), however, that the focus on the 'local scale needs to be tempered with the consideration that many of these local interactions are caused by trends and interactions at higher levels', and that:

'Local and global processes are deeply intertwined: what happens at one scale is not only connected to other scales (e.g. the influence of global markets on local land-use change for agriculture), but is to some degree itself part of processes at other scales e.g. national governments agree to global treaties, global agreements enforce or weaken the rights of local actors, local resource-use decisions result in global climate change, national law stimulates or resolves local conflicts'.

Sampford further argued that the trans-boundary nature of environmental issues has led to questions about whether the traditional political system(s) can offer the policy co-ordination

required to manage environmental problems. Sorenson and Torfing (2005) related this idea of the move from government to governance to the Westphalian political systems, where the idea of a sovereign state that governs society top-down through laws, rules and detailed regulations has lost its grip and is replaced by new ideas about a de-centred governance based on interdependence, negotiation and trust. Sampford's appraisal of the failings of the Westphalian model in the environmental context leads to the conclusion that a new approach to (trans-boundary) governance is required that includes not only governments, but also a wide range of non-state actors. In other words, a multi-actor network of state and non-state actors is required to govern the environment through a multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary approach. This more inclusive multi-actor approach is discussed further by Savan *et al.* (2004) in their consideration of the shifts in environmental governance towards a more citizen-based model. They argue that it is the changing *process* of governing that demands increased inclusivity and that governance plays an important role within the sub-sector of the environmental sector due to inter-related processes and the need for the state / non-state partnership approach. Whilst this multi-actor approach does seem to provide an efficient means for governing the environment, it also raises questions, however, regarding the democratic validity of these un-elected, and often selectively inclusive, networks made up of semi-autonomous actors (see Section 2.3.4 regarding democratic deficit).

What emerges from these studies is the argument that governance, whilst originating in social and economic development programmes, is not new as a concept or socio-political framework, but is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for the governing of the environment at all scales, from global to local. This paradigm shift from government to governing is a direct result of the need for inclusivity, the community-based approach and multi-actor partnerships. Thus, partnerships are widely considered as a delivery mechanism for public policy, or, in this context, as the means for operationalising the governance concept. In 1990, the OECD (1990, in Greer, 2001:752) defined partnerships as:

'Systems of formalised co-operation, grounded in legally binding arrangements or informal understandings, co-operative working relationships, and mutually adopted plans among a number of institutions. They involve agreements on policy and programme objectives and the sharing of responsibility, resources, risks and benefits over a specified period of time.'

In addition to policy arenas such as urban regeneration and social inclusion, partnership-working has become embedded as a significant vehicle for the implementation of rural development policy in the UK (Edwards *et al.*, 2001). Their emergence, in part, reflects a growing shift from government to governance (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Murdoch and Abram, 1998), and is a recognition of complex economic, social and political changes, which have transformed the manner in which policy is made and delivered (Greer, 2001). This includes an increasing acknowledgement of the multi-faceted nature of EPPP, the interconnectedness of environmental decisions taken at the local, regional and international levels, and the increasing fragmentation of policy delivery. The purpose of the next section is to review the approach and styles of partnerships and to explore the links between partnerships and governance.

2.2 Partnerships: a Tool for Environmental Governance?

Partnerships are defined by Darlow and Newby (1997:74) as 'an arrangement existing between two or more organisations working towards a defined goal.', where they also emphasise the high degree of interdependency and shared working that characterise partnerships, so setting them apart from the network approach of inter-agency co-ordination and collaboration. Skelcher (1996) sees these networks as the basis on which formal partnerships develop and Stoker (1998:23) describes self-governing networks as the 'ultimate partnership activity'. Partnerships exist along a broad continuum of theory and practice, with Pratt *et al.* (1998)

arguing that they require a wide range of commitment and working arrangements extending from competition to cooperation, coordination and coevolution, with shared goals only a feature of the latter. Mattesich and Monsey (1998) make similar distinctions, the most important of which is between types of joining-up, where partners maintain their individual authority but cooperate on some issues (often at the margins of their main 'business'), and types of joining-up where partners pool authority. The instinctive desire to maintain organisational autonomy implies the necessity for strong political leadership within all potential partner organisations committed to working together. Those involved in joint endeavour must perceive that there is credibility to be gained from persevering despite the difficulties. Inter-agency relationships are complex and with varying actor priorities, so clarity of purpose, a clear set of objectives and a coherent and feasible programme are essential for a successful partnership (Section 8.6.1 of this study draws on theoretical and empirical findings to present the components of effective partnership-working).

Although written in the urban context, Haughton's (1999) paper entitled 'Information and Participation within Environmental Management', presents some interesting arguments regarding the key components of processes for informed and participatory environmental management and planning. In addition to discussing technical expertise, it emphasised the role of the community in understanding the environment and helping develop appropriate responses and discussed how these fit within the broader debates on 'good governance'.

'Whilst there is much rhetoric about commitment to public participation, too often the reality is that this is lacking. In part, this reflects unreasonable expectations of community groups and a reluctance by state authorities to invest in capacity-building for this sector - too often, attachment to participation reeks of seeking to off-load responsibilities without shifting resources, or of attempts at bureaucratic capture, keeping groups tied to small revenue streams without allowing them to build up the

asset base from which they can develop their own revenue streams' (Haughton, 1999:61).

The above extract includes a number of points that this study has expanded on, including Haughton's themes of 'rhetoric vs. reality' of public participation (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2), the off-loading of responsibilities (see Section 5.2.2) and the lack of third sector capacity-building (see Section 5.3). The delivery of government policies has, however, become dominated by ideas of networks and partnerships. This approach is perceived as politically and financially beneficial because it seeks to bring together the multiple parties with an interest in a particular locality or and / or interest. Sometimes such approaches have been locally initiated, while in other cases they are a prerequisite for entry into central government and European funding programmes (Lowndes *et al.*, 2007). The last decade has also witnessed a significant move towards new modes of governing that are based on coordination and collaboration (Imrie and Raco, 1999). In particular, local level partnerships (i.e. Local Biodiversity Action Plans) have been widely introduced around the world and have become a key means for the governing and implementation of environmental policies at the local level i.e. putting policies into practice.

This is a direct reflection of the increasingly complicated nature of the trans-boundary (political, social and territorial) nature of these policies which has subsequently led to the embracing of the concepts of partnerships, alliances, collaborations and networks. Environmental problems, however, appear on different and more or less distinct spatial scales. As Newig and Fritsch (2009) point out, a localised pollution incident can lead to a wider socio-ecological impact cutting across established administrative territorial jurisdictions, and that to effectively respond to such challenges, the scale of governance institutions should be adapted to that of the environmental issue. This has led partnerships to range from community-based,

locally self generated and voluntary initiatives, to top-down, centrally-steered and government-driven structures (see Section 7.3 regarding managerial technologies).

Partnerships are well researched and there is a large body of existing knowledge (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Darlow and Newby, 1997; Goodwin, 1998; Hutchinson, 1994; Imrie and Raco, 1998; Mackinnon, 2002; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Skelcher, 1996; Stoker, 1998). Tilson *et al.* (1997) state that partnerships are not a new concept, but a well established instrument for the formulation and implementation of public policy. In the political context, Hastings (1996) and Stoker (1998) discuss public-private partnerships in the Thatcher years as formed to alleviate the economic issues associated with chronic urban housing problems. This concept of the public-private partnership has now evolved to become an operational norm in a wide range of government programmes. Although partnership projects can be initiated by government, they rely heavily on, and increasingly expect, voluntary support and public help in order to succeed. Whilst some commentators suggest that partnerships have 'merely created a series of marriages of convenience between disparate factions' (Tilson *et al.*, 1997:1) and that voluntary effort and active citizenship are necessary to compensate for the withdrawal of state provision of services (Kearns, 1992; Murdoch, 1997; Stoker, 1998), the more positive appraisal is that it gives local ownership, increases capacity to deliver and provides the community-based platform that is essential for sustainability (Pearce and Mawson, 2003; Yarwood, 2002). Indeed, Chapter 28 of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit's Agenda 21 ('Local Authorities' Initiatives in Support of Agenda 21') outlined the objectives of LA21 and the actions required, detailing how local governments should foster partnerships with other organisations in order to both mobilise support and to promote knowledge and local capacity (Evans *et al.*, 2006; Gibbs and Jonas, 2000). At this local level, LA21 led to local authorities adopting the partnership approach to sustainable development by including previously marginalised actors through the creation of cross-sector collaborations between public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders (Day, 1998; United Nations, 1993). LA21 sought to achieve this by including all

community interests and stressed the need to involve local businesses (Worthington *et al.*, 2003).

Partnerships are now considered by policy and research communities as central to sustainability and environmental programme delivery due to an increasing governance-based approach through 'bottom-up' participatory processes and the crossing of political divides and geographic boundaries (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Hutchinson, 1994; Sorensen, 2005). Davies (2002:190) concurred:

'Within policy circles, multi-sector partnerships, despite their inherent slipperiness in terms of definition, distinction and containment, are seen as an important mechanism whereby sustainable development can be operationalised and in particular local governance structures can be strengthened'.

The outcomes of the Rio Earth Summit arguably provided the foundation for the environmental sector's subsequent focus on sustainable development, partnerships and governance discourse throughout the 1990s (Davies, 2002). This included 'sustainable development' and 'grass roots community understanding and action' becoming the accepted responses by contemporary society when presented with increasingly pressing issues (Smith *et al.*, 2000). Its core themes certainly brought focus to partnerships by including the need to develop collaborative advantage when seeking to solve environmental issues and the assertion that global partnerships are only effective if based on new levels of co-operation between key sectors of society and government. Huxham (1996) argued that partnerships gain this collaboration advantage when an objective is met that could not be done by a single partner, i.e. through synergistic gain and programme enhancement from the sharing of resources in a *collaborative* as opposed to *competitive* manner. As mentioned above, one of the five key documents to come out of the Rio Earth Summit was Agenda 21, which called on governments

to adopt national strategies for sustainable development by addressing social, economic and environmental processes. Core to this principle were partnerships, with Agenda 21's Chapter 2 emphasising (on a global level) the need for trans-national corporations, business, regional, state, provincial and local governments, NGOs and community groups to work together.

The WSSD then identified the need for partnership models to include key components, including targets, timetables, monitoring, coordination and implementation mechanisms, arrangements for predicted funding and technology transfer. Closely related to these objectives was the need for clear acknowledgement of the perceived advantages that these collaborations could bring. In financial terms, for example, a clear incentive may be access to additional funding. Partnership-working may also facilitate innovative service developments that depend on the joint input of complementary professional skills, with scientific credentials particularly relevant in the environmental sector (Eden *et al.*, 2006; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Yarwood, 2002). It is also important, however, to identify and acknowledge the potential threats to each partner so that there will be mutual sensitivity to their difficulties, together with recognition that certain risks are undertaken (Hardy *et al.*, 1992; Springett, 1995). According to Thomson (1999), it is the demonstration of these tangible opportunities and threats on all sides that sustains collaborative working. A clear indication of willingness to co-operate based on a sense of the potential advantages also helps counteract the pressure to preserve organisational autonomy (these power structures and rights of authority are examined in greater detail in Section 7.2) and to avoid Tilson *et al.*'s (1997:1) 'marriages of convenience'.

The autonomy of partnerships is an important issue and, despite some authors arguing that governance presents the opportunity for flexible and less-formalised structures (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Papadopoulus, 2003; Stoker, 1997), many partnerships still rely on external funding from central government and the European Union that limits their capacity to adjust to local

context (empirical findings in Chapters 5 and 7 support this assertion). Lowndes *et al.* (1997:334) also argued that, during the 1990s, multilateral partnerships of state and non-state actors were developed partly in response to 'local imperatives and debates about building healthy and sustainable communities, but also...stimulated by central government funding programmes'. These local partnerships are then faced with a dilemma; firstly that central government sets the agenda, yet the partnerships are also expected to respond to local needs and requirements. Secondly, when the external funding is discontinued, the sustainability⁴ of the partnership arrangements themselves is then called into question (Peck and Tickell, 1995). Findings from the MTPN certainly suggest that difficulties in securing replacement funding for partnerships and projects can leave both a 'funding gap' and a 'capacity gap' (see Section 5.3 regarding the resource deficit and the steps taken by some third sector actors to build programme financial sustainability).

The partnership concept implies 'inclusivity, equitability and transparency' (Davies, 2002:192), so the ideal scenario is where there are comparable levels of contribution in terms of finance and other resources, and that all partners have the same degree of involvement and management control. In reality, however, partners invariably have varying technical and financial resources. Although a partnership may arise out of informal processes of networking based on trust and mutual benefit, as mentioned above, it may then subsequently be formalised in order to access funding (i.e. government, European, or philanthropic - see Appendix G for details and classifications of various environmental funders). The priority that the access to funding assumes in actor's day-to-day business activities is emphasised by Alter and Hage (1993:109), who comment that 'organisational decision-makers' primary focus is on finding and defending an adequate supply of resources' (findings supported this assertion). This focus, argued Lowndes *et al.* (1997), may then lead to the creation of hierarchical

⁴ Sustainability in this context means continuation of a partnership after end of the initial funding. For example, if a partnership was formed and funding provided to carry out a three year biodiversity project, then the partnership may dissolve at the end of the three year term. In some case, this may be acceptable, but findings suggest that most partnerships seek to continue.

structures based on rules and status, with subsequent contractual, market-based relationships constructed to allocate resources for the delivery of a programme. If / when this situation arises, then the heterarchy of the governance concept is potentially compromised, with new power structures built, and the creation of 'partnership principals' may occur (see Section 7.2.2 regarding how an actor can adopt the position of 'partnership principal'). Where there is this type of significant imbalance, it is reasonable to query whether there can ever be a genuine partnership, with Alter and Hage (1993) suggesting that partners have to be of a similar size and Hardy *et al.* (1992) also arguing that there should be no *junior partners*. These are interesting arguments, but ones that this study do not support due to the very nature of the governance approach engaging with a wide variety of actors invariably bring differing levels of resources and expertise to partnerships.

Bennett and Krebs (1991) further emphasise organisational relationships by discussing the bringing together of public, private and voluntary sector actors to establish agreements working *towards a common end*. The common end in this context is sustainable development, which Smith *et al.* (2000:215) argued provides the challenge 'where globally agreed goals are formally expressed at national level, yet assumed to be delivered by grass-roots action'. Increasingly discussed by leading authors, partnerships are placed in the environmental context as a multi-level collaborative activity that is rooted in environmental governance, where stakeholder collaboration becomes an important feature in the multi-dimensional nature of many environmental problems and approaches (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Day, 1998; Evans, 2004; Goodwin, 1998; Imrie and Raco, 1998; Jepson, 2005; Jessop, 1998, 2002; Mackinnon, 2002; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Scott, 2004; Stoker, 1998; Thompson, 2005; Yarwood, 2002). O'Donnell and Thomas (1998:122) outline the key characteristics of these partnerships:

- The process involves a combination of consultation, negotiations and bargaining.

- The partnership process is heavily dependent on a shared understanding of the key mechanisms and relationships in any given area.
- The process reflects interdependence between the partners. The partnership is necessary because no party can achieve its goals without a significant degree of support from others.
- Partnership is characterised by a problem-solving approach designed to produce consensus, in which various interest groups address joint problems.
- Partnership involves trade-offs both between and within interest groups.

New Labour has attempted to seat these notions of grassroots action, state / non-state collaboration, community action and social organisation at the local level within its third Way political framework, which recognises the new freedom for individuals, 'autonomy of action' and wider community involvement (Curry, 2001; Giddens, 1998:65). In turn, new relationships between the individual and the community are required that are constant with the notions of 'no rights without responsibilities' and 'no authority without democracy' (Giddens, 1998:68).

This study unpacks these notions through its exploration of responsibility and legitimacy. Hutton (1999:73) argued that these new relationships between individuals and community are inextricably linked through the notion of 'the stakeholder economy and society', and that this new political thinking also introduced the ideas of social cohesion, trust, co-operation, long-termism, participation, active citizenship, rights and obligations. This new value system, argued Curry (2001), is used to address government policies which now rely on the development of state / non-state partnerships to being grassroots action and build stakeholder responsibility. In addition to this new local action and responsibility paradigm, Hutton (1991) argued that the state actively sought to involve non-state actors in policy-making and implementation to bring broader social benefits, as well as more direct local community advantages.

Although the third Way agenda was set by New Labour in the late 1990s, Curry (2001) points out that the concept has a longer history, with the notions of subsidiarity and citizenship being presented in the 1980s by the Conservative government. Whilst perhaps originally created by the then government to widen consumer choice and increase public service customer-orientation and value for money, policies also began to emerge that gave local communities a stronger voice and greater responsibility (Curry, 2001). There was not, however, a dovetailing of Thatcherism and New Labour agendas, with Curry also pointing out the substantive difference between government ethos, i.e. that New Labour sought to strengthen the rights and access to information to exercise a collective influence over bureaucratic and corporate power (as opposed to a stronger voice in the market). As a result of this, the need for state / non-state collaborations increased, with the ensuing partnerships and associated notions of active citizenship, social cohesion and stakeholder empowerment becoming key components of governance (for further examination of active citizenship see Ranade and Hudson, 2003; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Snape and Taylor, 2003).

With Old Labour's 'command and control' systems seen as 'outmoded' and the 'market-type solutions' of the Conservative 80's ideologically and practically condemned, the third Way subsequently produced a stream of legislation, policy guidelines, 'best practice' and additional funding. It aimed to develop partnerships between the statutory, voluntary and private sectors and increase and diversify stakeholder engagement, especially local communities, also known as 'community governance' (Goodwin' 1998; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Raco *et al.*, 2006). This new form of governance was operationalised by the state around the South West region by the South West Regional Development Agency, which, for example, lists the requirement for spatial or thematic partnerships to access their Rural Renaissance programme (South West Regional Development Agency, 2004). Authors such as Wilson (2004) and agencies such as the South West Rural Affairs Forum, consider formerly politically marginalised actors such as environmental and community groups as becoming part of the new decision-making and policy

· formulation network. Some also argue that these new 'rural' partnerships go hand-in-hand with the changing vision of newly empowered rural community stakeholders and apparent shift in attitudes towards greater environmental stewardship (Winter, 1996; Jessop, 1998; Mackinnon, 2000).

2.3 Environmental Partnerships

2.3.1 Background and the Environmental Context

Worthington *et al.* (2003) argued that the unique challenges produced by the environmental sector cut across disciplinary boundaries and, therefore, require cross-sector collaborations. These complex collaborations, suggest Bulkeley *et al.* (2003:235), involve actors from 'local, national and international levels, and from public, private and civil society spheres, and that the shift from government to governance, or from a more linear, state-dominated political system to one which involves non-hierarchical relations between a dense web of state and non-state actors'. Findings suggest that this is indeed the case, though this study agrees (see Chapter 7) with their subsequent assertions that 'no one tier or sphere is necessarily dominant in any particular case, and the ensuing policy outcomes will be a result of the processes which occur within and between arenas of governance'. Wallington *et al.* (2003) argue that these multi-level partnerships have been championed as the most appropriate vehicle for solving environmental problems due to their sharing of skills, resources and knowledge, and the ensuing legitimacy attributed to plans, policies and programmes. This argument is also supported by Jordan *et al.* (2003) who discussed the emergence of governance and the fact that no single actor has the resources, knowledge or information to solve complex environmental problems whilst also retaining the desired triple-bottom-line of environmental, social and economic sustainability. Others have argued that no single organisation working alone is able to achieve this goal as effectively as a number of partner organisations working

together to create the desired *added value* sought by most partnerships (Darlow and Newby, 1997; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Ranade and Hudson, 2003). However, whilst organisations working together will (for the most part) benefit from shared resources and bring added value to their activities, Edwards *et al.* (2000) argued that differing partnership aims and structures often produce different obstacles to effective partnership-working and may therefore require different strategies for good practice. Lockwood (2009:170) concurred:

‘Devolved and collaborative governance arrangements are intended to provide more co-ordinated approaches to the challenges presented by complex problems, and attempt to integrate activities of diverse public and private actors, instruments and institutions. In environmental matters, the challenge is coping with multiple values, multiple stakeholders, different interests, multiple functions of natural resources such as water, and high stakes’.

Debate over the partnership approach has led Mackintosh (1992) to theorise three partnership models. The first model is that of *synergy*, with sub-group *resource synergy* resulting from same-sector collaborations where organisations combine efforts for mutual gain and *policy synergy*, where differing public and private sector views, resources and objectives are combined to increase profit value, policy innovation or solutions (see also Hastings, 1996). The second model is *transformation*, where partnership-working changes or challenges the aims and operating cultures of each other to either find common ground for mutual benefit or move the other towards their own ideas. This process is further sub-grouped into *unidirectional transformation* where one partner changes and adapts to another’s core values, and *mutual transformation* where all partners carry out change. The final model is *budget enlargement*, where the primary reason for the partnership is to extract additional resources from another party. This is common in the environmental sector where access to funding is often achieved through partnering with a trust, charity or voluntary sector organisation. The

partnership approach is usually formed as a result of; (1) being able to address a defined problem; (2) being able to provide clear partner benefits; and (3) partner motivation and commitment. Stoker and Young (1993) list six factors for partnership sustainability:

- Recognition of dependency
- pooling of resources
- development of trust between partners⁵
- a mutual orientation
- a commitment over the long haul
- clear remit

Partnership-working and the adoption of a sustainable approach are considered by many to be critical in achieving desired outcomes. Social, economic and political factors need to be considered hand-in-hand with the core theme of environmental sustainability (i.e. biodiversity, allocation of natural resources and pollution) if there is to be a lasting impact. Joint ventures present a greater chance of success against the challenges increasingly facing the environment through both the pooling of strengths and skills, and the merging of audiences to build stakeholder support and programme legitimacy. The added benefits of increasingly effective political lobbyists, social integration through enterprise and community involvement and potential project longevity⁶ increases the credibility and effectiveness of partnerships. Social enterprise and community involvement are becoming the key delivery methods of environmental programmes and, alongside project longevity and funding, are increasingly considered to be central to the overall success of an environmental project (Edwards *et al.*, 2000; Hutchinson, 1994; Stoker, 1993). In the rural context, for example, research suggests that the post-productivist⁷ era in the agricultural landscape has broken down traditional government / private sector relationships, allowing formerly politically marginalised actors

⁵ It could be argued that this is not such a central feature within the environmental sector due to the largely non-commercial and not-for-profit nature of projects.

⁶ Partnership duration can also be limited by funding or short-term nature (Hutchinson 1994, Edwards *et al.* 2001).

⁷ *Post-Productivist*: extensification, diversification and dispersion of agricultural production. Indicators: policy change; organic farming; counter-urbanisation; inclusion of environmental NGOs at the core of policy-making; consumption of the countryside; and on-farm diversification activities (Wilson and Rigg, 2003).

such as environmental and community groups into the decision-making and policy formulation network (Wilson, 2004). This change in levels and trajectories of governance through local stakeholder empowerment is eroding corporate and state powers as sole advisors and shapers of policies and decisions affecting the rural sector as a whole (Boonstra, 2006). This whole process, referred to by Wilson (2004) as 'post-productivist rural governance', supports the arguments by Winter (1996), Jessop (1998) and Mackinnon (2000) that it goes hand-in-hand with the changing vision of newly empowered community stakeholders and a subsequent shift in attitudes away from destructive environmental practices. Thus, multiple environmental and development goals can be achieved by partnership networks adopting a broad range of technologies, policies, and measures that explicitly recognise the linkages between environmental problems and human needs (MacKinnon, 2000).

Edwards (2001:290) argued that partnerships may represent 'a new approach to government, rather than the emergence of competing forms of governance'. He further suggests that partnership-working is representative of institutional transition away from the 'spatially contiguous top-down and hierarchical system of the local state' towards both the steering of semi-autonomous and collaborative networks and a rescaling of governance through the transferring of power and responsibility (downwards) to community level. It is this inclusion of non-elected actors that raises the issues of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability that I argue are core socio-political issues surrounding the successful and democratic conversion of environmental policy into practice (referred to by Smith *et al.* (2000, in Davies 2002:192) as 'translating statements of intent into practical actions'.

I argue that the three core issues of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability represent the over-arching framework for understanding effective partnership-working. This thesis also argues that Stoker and Young's (1993) factors for partnership sustainability form distinct subsets of this framework. For example, it could be argued that an actor would not accept

responsibility if it did not have a 'commitment over the long haul'. I also suggest that the 'development of trust between partners' sits within the construct of *legitimacy*, and that a 'clear remit' is required to provide the required operational and financial *accountability*. Further notions of *power* and *trust*, also sit within the accepting of responsibility and the acquisition of legitimacy, respectively.

The following sub-sections focus specifically on these three issues of accepting *responsibility*, acquiring *legitimacy* and providing *accountability*, with further empirical foci being brought in chapters 5, 6 and 7 through researcher-practitioner experiences of the MTPN.

2.3.2 Responsibility

The European Union consists of a group of nation states with varying constitutional systems, ranging from unitary to federal (Fairbrass, 2003). The UK has traditionally been considered a unitary state, but New Labour's 1997 start of tenure began a period of constitutional reform, including the 1998 devolution of power and decentralisation of decision-making powers to bodies in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions. This new, regional governance was advocated as a means of locating governance closer to local communities to enhance democracy, increase stakeholder engagement, and reduce the need for regulatory intervention (Lane *et al.*, 2004). This new governance, argued Pellizzoni (2004:542), entailed an 'enhancement or a change in the relations of responsibility'. One policy area that has been devolved as part of this process, argued Fairbrass (2003), is environmental policy, with authority for environmental decision-making devolved to the sub-national level, requiring local authorities and a variety of non-state actors to shoulder responsibility for the delivery of environmental protection measures. This has, in part, been due to the problems associated with traditional 'command-and-control' strategies of government (Pellizzoni, 2005), including

over-legalisation, lack of local context, and the 'bureaucratic drag'⁸ and audit culture of central government (Jepson, 2005:517; see also Chapter 7 for further discussion). Thus, this governance approach has seen the state replacing direct intervention with new constructions of 'active' and 'responsible' citizens (Ferguson, 2010). This transferring of power and responsibility (downwards) to the community level brings new community involvement and the sharing of responsibilities between the state and non-state actors through partnership-working, and is seen as a central pillar of the broader discourse of sustainable development and key components of environmental governance (Raco, 2006; Thompson, 2005). However, this contracting-out of public services, or 'hollowing out of the state', makes it difficult for citizens to attribute responsibility for environmental programme quality, effectiveness and efficiency of delivery to any one actor due to the devolution of power and their (multi-actor) complexity and unelected nature (Jepson, 2005; Jessop, 1998; Shortall, 2004; Yarwood 2002). Stoker (1998:18) argued that this blurring of responsibilities between state and non-state actors 'can lead to blame avoidance and scape-goating'. It is further argued by Savan (2004) that this partnership (or non-state) approach results in more responsibility devolved into communities, which then effectively gives the government an opportunity to withdraw from their responsibilities. Thus, he argues, partnerships

'...can be constructed to limit the ability of government to shirk its responsibilities, while building a more informed citizenry that is able to provide opportunities and resources for the general public while observing elements of the local environment that are not seen by government agencies' (Savan, 2004:617).

Whilst Savan's argument highlighted the importance of localness (see also Evans, 2004), Higgins and Lockie (2002) also argued that this devolution of responsibility for environmental governance is not fully supported with the necessary resources (technical, financial, human) to

⁸ 'Costly bureaucracy that will divert scarce resources from the cause and do little to enhance efficiency and impact' (Jepson 2005:517).

meet the aim and objectives of the programmes they have been engaged to deliver⁹ (this argument receives an empirical focus in Section 5.3). Additionally, and perhaps paradoxically, it could also be argued that whilst many aspects of environmental programme delivery have been devolved downwards to community groups and NGOs, EPPP formulation has also shifted upwards to the supranational level such as the European Union (EU), i.e. the 1992 Habitats Directive and 2002 Waste Directive(s) (Fairbrass, 2003). What is speculated here, therefore, is that the state (at national level) has not only shifted responsibility for the development and delivery of environment programmes to multi-actor networks and supra-national organisations, but has also neglected to allocate sufficient resources to empower particularly lower-level organisations.

However, one of the main reasons for the partnership approach to environmental governance is to overcome problems in the implementation of environmental programmes through community involvement and stakeholder engagement in the decision-making process (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005; Volger, 2005). As a result, joint responsibility and ownership of programmes are theoretically developed, leading to improved support and actor commitment. It could be concluded, therefore, that for environmental programmes to assume this added level of responsibility, they 'must acknowledge interdependence, expand transparency, and emphasise the accountability of all parties for their own actions' and that 'clear and publicly available agreements should be developed which outline the respective responsibilities of citizens groups and government' (Savan *et al.*, 2004:617). This also raises issues concerning how the public will respond to these new governance structures and shared responsibility, the success of which is dependent on attitudinal and behavioural change at grassroots level (Goodwin, 1998; Jessop, 2002; Jordan, 1999; Wilson, 2004). The degree of actual, as opposed to desired, stakeholder engagement is also examined by Jepson (2005:522), who argued that

⁹ This is especially topical in the voluntary and community sector in the UK, where the current government is looking to indirectly assist the sector through the introduction of 'full cost recovery' (FCR). FCR aims to secure funding for overhead costs and make delivery agents sustainable. In recognition that public services have often suffered from a shortfall in funding due to project only (and not core) funding. FCR ensures that funding for programmes reflect the true cost of delivery.

responsibility and moral accountability are increasingly placed with NGOs in their role as community representatives¹⁰, where:

‘Most citizens might have a deep-seated need to believe in NGOs because to do otherwise would dismantle the civil structures through which citizens can abrogate their feelings of moral concern and responsibility for issues that are beyond their direct sphere of influence.’

It is evident, therefore, that the new devolved governance arrangement aims to create a shared responsibility for environmental sustainability amongst both state and non-state actors through environmental partnerships. These new relationships, however, need to:

1. Retain a steering presence by the state¹¹;
2. Assign stakeholder responsibilities to enable clear accountability and legitimacy; and
3. Uphold the key discourses of sustainable development (community and participation).

This downwards ‘redistribution of state functions’ to regions and outwards to non-state actors suggests ‘a reconsideration of the ways in which legitimacy and authority have been reconfigured’ (Bulkeley, 2005:879).

2.3.3 Legitimacy

Suchman (1995, in Jepson, 2005:519) defined legitimacy as ‘A generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within the socially constructed system of norms, values and beliefs and definitions’. Although Jessop (1990:343) highlighted that ‘the nature and forms of [state] legitimation vary and so do the

¹⁰ Thus indicating that responsibility is automatically attributed by citizens to these community representatives.

¹¹ Through managerial technologies and sufficient allocation of resources.

various functions and activities which states perform on behalf of the community', for there to be legitimacy of governance environments, Welch (2002:443) argued that there must 'either be legitimacy of key constituent parts, or a general understanding of (and legitimacy accorded to) the whole'. Legitimacy is further examined by Dryzek (2001:651), who argued that actions only become legitimate when the actor has the approval of society and that 'outcomes are legitimate to the extent they receive reflective assent through participation in authentic deliberation by all those subject to the decision in question'. This argument is robust in theory, yet practice can prove to be challenging due to the wide stakeholder engagement that it suggests (this is further explored in Section 2.3.4). Indeed, Parkinson (2003:180) argued that 'in complex societies deliberative participation by *all* those affected by collective decision-making is extremely implausible'. In the context of environmental partnerships, however, Connelly *et al.* (2006:268) concurred with Dryzek:

'The legitimacy of these structures (partnerships) is usually not specified but merely asserted, with partnerships presented as intrinsically good and their legitimacy as self-evident, without the necessity of new legitimising mechanisms to replace those inherent in representative democratic structures and that collaborative approaches are argued to secure legitimacy for these policies, by giving citizens and civil society organisations direct access to previously remote decision making processes, as equal 'stakeholders''.

Connelly *et al.* (2006:269) added that legitimacy is necessary for democracy as it exercises 'power without coercion'. Their argument included Schmitter's (2001:2) comments that for the actions of those 'that rule to be accepted voluntarily by those who are ruled, legitimacy must convert power into authority'. To contextualise, it is the conceptual underpinning of environmental governance that key programmes are shaped through collaborative deliberation between stakeholders, with these partnerships arguably securing legitimacy

through community involvement and public participation by providing access to previously remote decision making processes (Boonstra, 2006; Connelly *et al.*, 2006). This is particularly true since the turn to the paradigm of sustainable development and the adoption of Agenda 21, which highlighted the need for the involvement of non-state networks. Indeed, Steffek (2009:314) argued that 'as a good deal of voluntary collaboration is required and change towards sustainable lifestyles cannot be pushed through in a top-down fashion, institutional legitimacy is not only some normative asset but a functional imperative'. Given that there are a range of different actors involved in environmental governance, each with their own agenda to fulfil and potentially large individual as well as collective benefits, the key players have to be both legitimate and accountable. As such, there are also issues surrounding the legitimacy of actor's environmental knowledge and contributions (Eden *et al.*, 2006). In exploring this issue, Connelly *et al.* (2006:267) suggested that 'each arena's legitimacy was a hybrid, justified through a complex mix of competing rationales and that legitimacy is always conditional, in need of maintenance and susceptible to challenge' (see also Beetham, 1991). Jepson (2005:515) added that:

'One role of governance is to maintain and strengthen these legitimacy assets by establishing and over-seeing accountability streams that recognise that public trust is built on the cumulative evidence of legitimacy...trust and legitimacy is generated by the belief that NGOs (for example) act in accordance with what the public perceives as the qualities and values that characterise the movement. These might include...being the voice of nature, independent, honest, idealistic, grounded and cost effective'.

This argument is well-justified when considering the political role of NGOs, but potentially lacking when taking into account the potential for their subjective scientific contributions (as has recently been suggested by the media regarding climate change). This is especially pertinent when considering that environmental issues are usually defined as science-related

ones, where expert knowledge can be considered to be more important than the opinions, demands or needs of citizens (Sun *et al.*, 2009). Further, whilst political legitimacy is claimed by some of the larger NGOs due to their high numbers of members, this is a different validation criteria to scientific legitimacy i.e. an academic institution will bring this to a partnership but with little or no complementary political status due to its non-elected nature and lack of membership (Eden *et al.*, 2006). However, whilst 'scientific expertise remains the principal form of legitimisation in the leading environmental organisations', political, in addition to scientific, legitimacy must also be sought (Yearley, 1991:38).

On examining the concept of legitimacy in a deliberative democracy, Parkinson (2003:182) argued that legitimacy is subject to 'legality, justifiability and consent' - pre-conditions that can be achieved through having the appropriate interests, qualifications and / or experience (see also Connelly *et al.*, 2006 and Stoker, 1998). Choosing partners and maintaining networks with these legitimacy attributes are, therefore, essential for sponsoring agencies such as central government and are equally important for local communities if the partnership is to retain trust and confidence. This issue of legitimacy is also highlighted by Boonstra (2006:303), who stated that it 'becomes more problematic to rely on the authority of representatives concerning policy choices, and that constituencies no longer felt normatively obliged to accept agreements made by their representatives'. This is due to the fact that, unlike locally elected government officials, actors within many partnerships do not carry the mantle of legitimacy due to their autonomous, non-elected nature. Boonstra (2006:303) adds:

'It was common practice to reach a consensus over implementation with the representatives of the different, organised interest groups on a national and provincial level. However, the public at local levels did not accept these consensuses any longer. The support base of the traditional representatives weakened due to their fragmented constituency, which problematised consensus'.

However, an element of consistency with the principles of the representative democracy, including Goodwin's (1998:8) 'simple legitimacy of elected democracy and accountability', should be maintained by partnerships (O'Toole *et al.*, 2004). This is further argued by O'Toole and Burdess (2004:239) who, when discussing local development committees, asserted that 'Members of the development groups gain legitimacy through their coordinating functions as local representatives'. Legitimacy is, therefore, considered to be a precondition for effective governance and a means of delivering programmes whilst promoting stakeholder interests. For example, an (unelected) NGO receiving European or government funding for the delivery of Local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives, i.e. woodland regeneration, is not subject to the same monitoring and review as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or local council office. As such, it could, therefore, be considered to be lacking in legitimacy regarding the quantifiable delivery of government objectives (Ward and McNicholas, 1998). Where there is room for further discussion, however, is in the consideration of the smaller NGOs that do not benefit from such funding, but do still contribute to the formulation and delivery of EPPP. Additionally, if an NGO provides powerful actors (government agency, corporation or donor) with something of value, then it will be considered legitimate in their eyes but arguably lacking in community backing.

Legitimacy in the environmental context brings further discussion regarding the increasingly community-based approach of many environmental programmes leading to the inclusion of non-elected semi-autonomous actors. This raises questions surrounding knowledge and contributions. However, Connelly *et al.* (2006) argued that partnerships are considered to be intrinsically good and it appears that no single conclusion can be drawn about the legitimacy of environmental partnerships beyond that the principles remain grounded in representative democracy. As argued by Jepson (2005), accountability, therefore, becomes a process of legitimacy management and development and the structuring and oversight of these processes are key to environmental governance.

To conclude this discussion on the legitimisation of EPPP, I draw on Connelly *et al.*'s (2006:276) findings, which also lead to the next section's discussion regarding democratic deficit:

'Despite their perceived faults, traditional representative forms of governance are still very widely accepted - by the mass of the population, by many policy makers, and by many political analysts. In contrast, new participatory and partnership approaches rely on norms of deliberation which may only be accepted by (some of) the relatively limited circle of stakeholders directly involved. More generally, if norms of deliberative democracy are to take their place as accepted principles for legitimate rural governance, then a great deal of work is needed to discursively establish their acceptability both in networks of governance and with the wider population'.

2.3.4 Democratic Deficit

Since governance is the changing 'state-society' relationships in which state and non-state actors are equal partners in governing (Rhodes, 1996), the transformation of governance requires not only the devolution of power from the public to the private sector, but also the involvement of citizens in the process of decision-making, which is an issue that lies at the heart of democracy (Sun *et al.*, 2009). 'Democratic deficit' refers to a lack of trust in state actors, especially with the increasing prominence of private actors in environmental governance leading to a loss of democratic oversight and parliamentary control (Ferretti, 2006; Steffek, 2009). Ferretti (2006:19) argue that 'transparency, accountability and improved participation can remedy this', he also suggests that participation can 'increase institutional inefficiency, generate frustration and mistrust, and even anger among the public, or simply waste precious public resources'. I suggest that Dryzek's (2001:651) arguments regarding 'reflective assent', 'participation' and 'authentic deliberation by all those subject to the decision in question' are indeed profound in the context of legitimising EPPP. His arguments,

however, do not appear to be supported by Imrie and Raco (1999), who argued that the new local governance is part of the emergence of a post-bureaucratic state, which is not necessarily bound by the need for local democratic process and accountability, and also by O'Toole and Burdess (2004) who suggested that 'Unlike locally elected officials of a democratic institution...community groups do not carry the mantle of legitimacy that entitles them to represent the 'interests' of their community'. These arguments present, therefore, the issue of democratic deficit where the state can fall short of meeting democratic obligations. This is indeed a challenge that links to Stoker's (1997:10) discourse regarding the 'distribution of power' between the state and unelected non-state actors and Arnstein's (1969, in Savan *et al.*, 2004) earlier 'ladder of citizen participation' concept, the latter of which presents public participation ranging from tokenistic through to the inducement of significant social reform. From a governmentality perspective, Swyngedouw (2005) argued that the shift from 'government' to 'governance' can empower the economic elite and disempowers community groups, reduces democratic participation and, therefore, leads to a democratic deficit.

The principles of governance reflect an inclusive and democratic approach to governing and are argued by many authors as including the move from representative to deliberative democracy (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Goodwin 1998). This idea of a more deliberative approach is argued by Sorenson and Torfing (2005:197) as creating 'public purpose' and by Connelly *et al.* (2006:269) as exercising 'power without coercion' - both concepts grounded in the idea that grassroots acceptance is needed for effective programme delivery. In the environmental context, programmes should benefit from this situated (context-orientated) legitimacy to ensure grassroots uptake. This is, arguably, obtained through the process of this new deliberative democracy, which should generate the conditions of impartiality, rationality and knowledge of the relevant facts and therefore lead to moral (and political) legitimacy. In the partnership context, Hodge (2001) argued that actors within these new environmental partnerships are more flexible and less bureaucratic than many government agencies, given

their generally smaller size and the lack of democratic accountability. An initial conclusion can be drawn, therefore, that democratic deficit can occur when these new governance structures fail in fulfilling the principles of democracy in their practice and operation due to the non-elected and self-selecting nature of some actors (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998).

Partnerships can also play a significant role in altering the democratic balance of an area due to their non-representativeness, thus bringing further complications regarding their legitimacy and accountability (see Curry, 2001, regarding the representativeness and public accountability of community participation projects). From a policy perspective, it is important to identify if partnerships are actually providing avenues for the sustainable development ideals of democracy and participation at grassroots level. Indeed, Lowndes *et al.* (1997:342) suggest that 'At one level, the spread of networks and partnerships can be seen as symptomatic of a political malaise, where unrepresentative groupings fill the democratic deficit in local politics'. Lowndes and Skelcher (1998:316) also argued that '...partnerships may be criticised as reflecting a broader democratic deficit in which non-elected bodies and self-selected representatives gain power at the expense of elected politicians'. Perhaps the time has also come, therefore, to take proactive steps to strengthen the social side (capital and justice) of environmental governance, an idea argued by Boonstra (2006) who wrote that:

'If people are not socialised in these values they are not able to co-operate with each other and the state. Consequently, a decline of social capital is supposed to lead to civic disengagement and political apathy, which undermines good democratic governance.'

Through New Labour's employment of concepts like 'social capital', 'social enterprise', 'community development', 'partnerships' and 'community building', local people and organisations are increasingly encouraged to play a greater role in the provision of local

services i.e. playing a role in governing, as opposed to being governed. The credibility of the bottom-up (or active citizenship) approach is built when considering how stakeholder engagement can overcome the implementation gap between EPPP formulation and delivery through the empowerment paradigm of joint responsibility and ownership (Evans 2004, Fairbrass 2003, Jepson 2005, Lowndes and Skelcher 1998, Raco *et al.*, 2006; Sampford, 2002). During the late 1990s, this approach evolved into new forms of community-focused governance, much of it based on emerging discourses of sustainable development and in reaction to the perceived local democratic deficit of the Thatcher years (Parker, 2002; Raco, 2003). I suggest that the political legitimacy that is sought by the partnership approach, however, is a concept that is lacking in scholarly contribution in the environmental context. Furthermore, the non-elected and semi-autonomous natures of the actors engaged in this partnership approach also raise issues regarding accountability, which is now explored in the next section.

2.3.5 Accountability

Accountability mechanisms and structures are redrawn in arrangements of governance-beyond-the-state (Rhodes, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2005). Accountability is the process of reporting to a recognised entity to which actions are held responsible, with Swyngedouw (2005:2000) arguing that 'it is assumed to be internalised within participating groups. However, given the diffuse and opaque systems of representation, accountability is generally very poorly, if at all, developed.' He further suggests that:

'The combined outcome of this leads to often more autocratic, non-transparent systems of governance that - as institutions - wield considerable power and, thus, assign considerable, albeit internally uneven power, to those who are entitled

(through a selective random process of invitation) to participate' (see also Goodwin, 1998, regarding selective representation, and Section 6.2.2).

Jepson (2005) suggested that moral accountability is an actor's responsibility to its mission, value and stakeholders whom it represents. For example, an NGO is accountable to donors for the successful delivery of the programme for which it has been funded. Goodin (2003:376), however, argued that 'NGOs are often not themselves accountable to anyone, incorporating them might merely exacerbate the democratic deficit.' Accountability reporting can be geared towards major donors as opposed to the membership or stakeholders whom the NGO represents. The issue of accountability has, therefore, gained new relevance in the environmental sector for a number of reasons, primarily due to the sub-contracting of programme delivery to non-elected, multi-actor partnerships making it difficult for stakeholders to attribute responsibility for quality and / or effectiveness of programme delivery (O'Toole and Burdess, 2004). Jepson (2005) also highlighted:

'The growing perception that together these aspects of neoliberal economic theory and globalisation are enabling publicly unaccountable markets, corporations and inter-governmental bodies to become overly dominant in dictating the values and policies that form the context of everyday life.'

These issues have subsequently been compounded by partnerships' willingness to support the move from top-down to community-based programme delivery frameworks due to the benefits of; (i) increased (and diversified) funding streams¹² (grants, contracts and philanthropy); and (ii) the new capacity for political influence, the latter of which results from new forms of environmental governance and can arguably be seen as non-specific to the

¹² In the UK, the allocation of public money is increasingly undertaken through organisations and agencies which have not been elected by the public. For example, the amount of public money spent by QUANGOs represented £46.6 billion in 1993, nearly one third of the total public spending (Hutchinson, 1994).

programme for which the partnership was originally engaged. This is an argument that can be developed further by the idea that different accountability regimes are adopted depending on the actor's role i.e. either programme delivery or political advocacy (Jepson, 2005). However, if new actors become involved at this level (programme development (politically) and delivery (operationally)), they must themselves be fully accountable, otherwise their own legitimacy will be eroded and, therefore, their ability 'to deliver' undermined due to reduced stakeholder engagement. In consideration of the political context surrounding this discussion, Mackinnon (2002:297) argued that this neoliberalist approach to local governance

'...directs itself against the technologies of welfarism by seeking to 'free' subjects from collective forms of social provision as it strives to (re)construct the conditions in which 'enterprise' and competition can flourish. Consequently, economic government has been 'de-socialised' in an effort to stimulate entrepreneurship by reducing social obligations and costs'.

Mackinnon's discussion occurred in the context of local economic governance, but I suggest that the principles remain the same for EPPP formulation and delivery. It is, however, an argument that theoretically goes against the very principles of environmental governance through its disconnection ('de-socialising') with the very communities it is trying to engage, but is also one supported by the idea that markets and initiatives are the most efficient means for achieving growth and service delivery. There is also a risk that inappropriate accountability methodology may be implemented that subsequently dilutes the independent change-agent grassroots role that is offered to previously marginalised actor networks by the governance approach (Jepson, 2005). For example, the application of a bureaucratic state monitoring and review process, whilst a prerequisite regarding the allocation and spend of public funds, can restrict an actor's capacity to deliver the programme for which they have been contracted or funded. This is due to the need for collecting evidence on how the funds have been spent and

the subsequent delivery of programme aims and objectives (both 'core' expenses for the delivery partner, but often not funded by 'the project'). Jepson (2005:515) argued that:

'One manifestation of this was the extended contracting of public service-delivery to outside bodies including NGOs and the need for these bodies to adopt a culture of setting and auditing targets of performance and procedural efficiency. Many believe the audit culture has.....reduced the time available to professionals for front-line service delivery. Such views are common-place within those ENGOs¹³ that have received grants managed by development agencies and witnessed the way the associated bureaucracy either ties up experienced field staff in endless rounds of grant writing, evaluation and reporting and / or necessitates the hiring of staff from development agencies.'

Also referred to by Jepson (2005:517) as 'bureaucratic drag', the UK government requirement to implement performance metrics and reporting reduces programme efficiency and impact, a concept that is highlighted by this research through an empirical focus of the relationship between Moor Trees and the Community Boost Fund.

To conclude this section, I suggest that the environmental sector needs to develop a distinct and credible accountability regime to establish and maintain public trust whilst enabling efficient and reviewable EPPP delivery. Although community involvement is a key component of environmental governance, sustainable development and active citizenship, a compromise is required between the accountability of non-elected actors in the use of public funds and the merits of the bottom-up framework within which many modern environmental programmes are required to work (Imrie and Raco, 1999; Mackinnon 2000, 2002). Perhaps the solution is an inter- as opposed to intra-actor accounting process that could also bring a new era of not just

¹³ ENGOs: Environmental NGOs

accountability and transparency, but also one of collaboration (see Christensen, 2003), or, improved partnership-working.

2.4 Conclusion

Literature has shown extensive research on governance and partnerships, and the growing relationship between the two in the environmental sector, specifically as part of the sustainable development paradigm. The concepts of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability are also well researched, though lacking in conceptual and empirical focus in the environmental partnership context. Part 3 of this thesis provides detail on actors, networks and data collection techniques that I used to contribute to this research gap.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

To introduce the empirical component of this study, this chapter reviews the methodological approach used for data collection and analysis to meet the following objectives:

- Using the MTPN as a case study, to analyse whether and to what extent the state is devolving responsibility and authority for environmental decision-making and the delivery of EPPP to the non-state, or grassroots, actor level through discourses of community responsibility, partnership-working and self-governing.
- To assess if democratic legitimacy is lost through the inclusion of non-elected, non-state actors in the formulation and delivery of EPPP.
- To explore the financial and operational accountability framework(s) of the MTPN and to analyse the implications of quantitative and qualitative reporting mechanisms.
- To critically assess the Moor Trees Partnership Network to further the understanding of the practical issues that environmental partnerships must address in order to become effective delivery vehicles for EPPP.

To meet these objectives, a multi-method approach was used to carry out a quantitative and qualitative analysis of actors and partnership networks (predominantly¹⁴) around the South West of England. The aim of this thesis is to consider the partnership approach in environmental governance and to research the issues of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability, using the case study of the MTPN. This network has been chosen as an example of partnership-working across the environmental sector as a whole, partly because I was embedded within the environmental sector through employment with Moor Trees, and also

¹⁴ Some actors were interviewed outside of this geographical boundary due to their national remit.

because it provided a reliable basis upon which to draw general conclusions. Thus, action research and participant observation enabled an in-depth assessment of the associated actors and networks. The nature of this study, i.e. the study of inter- and intra-actor relationships and network dynamics, meant that my often exclusive access to MTPN actors was vital in meeting the research objectives. This chapter outlines the various methods that were used to bring an empirical focus to these actors and networks and gives the conceptual underpinning for each research method. Section 3.2 discusses triangulation as the rationale for using multiple sources of evidence gathered from more than one standpoint to bring together a more objective and focused analysis. Section 3.3 discusses the MTPN case study, which was set within the geographical context of South West England and drew upon the advantages of my position as a researcher-practitioner. Section 3.4 considers participant observation and action research, where my embeddedness within the MTPN enabled my working with network actors towards the change and improvement of partnerships. Section 3.5 discusses the secondary data collected and analysed from a variety of sources, including actor websites, literature, reports and government statistics. Section 3.6 introduces questionnaires as the method used to provide quantitative data via an online survey and from which I received a 77% response rate. Section 3.7 discusses the semi-structured Interviews used for a conversational approach to qualitative data collection. Section 3.8 considers the issues of ethics, reflexivity and objectivity of the embedded researcher, while 3.9 brings this chapter to a conclusion.

3.2 Triangulation: Rationale for using Multiple Sources of Evidence

3.2.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of Triangulation

‘Social scientists have borrowed the term triangulation to help describe how the use of multiple approaches to a research question can enable the researcher to ‘zero in’ on the answers or information sought’ (Singleton *et al.*, in Oppermann (2000:142)).

Philip (1998) argued that 'multi-method' research is becoming an obvious choice due to the multi-dimensional nature of human geography and because no single method will fully capture the meaning of the social world. This approach enables the verification of the *reliability* and *validity* of other techniques, with reliability achieved when results can be trusted by the researcher when a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions (Hoggart *et al.*, 2002; Sarantakos, 1998; Williams, 2003). Validity is achieved when an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe, or, whether the 'explanation fits the description' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:69, see also Brewer and Hunter's (1989:83) assertion that 'Multi-method research tests the validity of measurements, hypotheses, and theories by means of triangulated cross-method comparison'). This has become known as 'triangulation', where multiple methods are used to answer a specific question. Triangulation is one of the most powerful techniques for strengthening credibility. It is based on the idea of convergence, when multiple sources provide similar findings their credibility is considerably strengthened (Baxter and Eyles, 1997:514). For example, a structured questionnaire could be used alongside interviews, secondary sources and participant observation (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996:206; Sarantakos, 1998). Oppermann (2000:145) concluded that this combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques is about the 'verification of results and, in the process, identifying and eliminating methodological shortcomings, data or investigator bias. A multi-method approach allows researchers to be more confident about their results'.

Triangulation is considered by Hoggart *et al.* (2002:67) to be a principal outcome of the multi-methods approach, whereby a series of complementary methods are used to gain a deeper insight into a research problem by enhancing the researcher's capacity to interpret meaning and behaviour. They add that triangulation 'strengthens confidence in conclusions by providing multiple routes to the same result'. Triangulation can, therefore, be broadly defined as the use of different data sources and collection procedures to research a single issue. Flick (1998:229)

defined triangulation as 'used to name the combination of different methods, study groups, local and temporal settings, and different theoretical perspectives in dealing with a phenomenon'. Denzin (1978) lists four types of triangulation; (i) Data (gathering data through several sampling strategies, so that slices of data at different times and social situations are gathered); (ii) Investigator (using multiple researchers in an investigation, thus reducing error and bias); (iii) Theory (using more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon); and (iv) Methodological (involves using more than one method to gather data i.e. interviews, questionnaires, and secondary sources). Denzin (1978:38) argued that triangulation 'remains the soundest strategy of theory construction', i.e. 'the greater the triangulation, the greater the confidence in the research findings'. Hoggart *et al.* (2002:69) further argued that 'conclusions are strengthened if they are confirmed from different theoretical perspectives' and that 'conviction about a perspective is enhanced by evaluation of alternative interpretations'. The strengths of triangulation as a research method are further discussed by Yin (1994:92), who argued that multiple sources of evidence allow the researcher to address a broader range of 'historical, attitudinal and behavioural issues and that the ensuing converging lines of enquiry' bring together more convincing and accurate findings through the comparison of quantitative findings with qualitative evidence. Yin's argument under-pins my own rationale for triangulation, where I collected and analysed quantitative and qualitative data to explore the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of MTPN actors. Robson (2002:371) argued that multiple questions, rather than focusing on a 'specific research question, may be used to address complementary issues within a study and also enhance interpretability through the discussion of otherwise purely statistical analyses' (from, for example, questionnaires).

However, triangulation can also bring discrepancies and disagreements from different sources. Indeed, this study brought examples of this when comparing secondary data (see 3.7) with primary data collected from semi-structured interviews (see 3.6) and via the participatory

approach (see 3.4). This conflict arose on a small number of occasions when comparing organisation vs. individual responses. This was mainly due to organisations' published stance toward partnership-working occasionally conflicting with the views of individual employees. Williams (2003) argued that such individual response bias can distort method or findings, so I carefully assessed the inferences made between responses (Eyles and Smith, 1988), finding that this sometimes proved to be a positive outcome when it led to the questioning of a presumed conclusion i.e. that 'all partnerships are good'. Some researchers have argued, however, that multiple methods do not guarantee better results (Blaikie, 1993; Silverman, 1985; Williams, 2003). Triangulation may, for example, lead to:

- Incorrect research conditions and or research foundations
- Difficulty in replicating a mixed methodology
- Adaptation to suit researcher bias
- Varying results leading to the need for complex collation and comparison techniques
- Difficulties in transferring data for comparison between methods

It is argued that each method still needs to be tested thoroughly and independently to build reliability and validity. Sarantakos (1998:169) also argued that 'the number of methods that are most appropriate in each research design must be evaluated in the context of the project in question.'

3.2.2 Triangulation in the Partnership Research Context

Environmental partnerships are both multi-faceted and complex by nature. According to Cohen and Manion (1986:254), triangulation attempts to 'map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint'. This argument was particularly relevant to this study, with my embeddedness suggesting that a

semi-structured interview approach would be effective due to the existing professional relationship with many of the participating actors, as well as the in-depth investigations that could be carried out. To expand on this otherwise singular approach to data collection, I used the following qualitative and quantitative methods:

- Participant Observation and Action Research (Section 3.4)
- Questionnaires (Section 3.5)
- Semi-structured interviews (Section 3.6)
- Secondary Sources (Section 3.7)

Triangulation of results increased objectivity and reduced the researcher bias resulting from my professional association as practitioner by accounting for the potential for the artificial or biased construction of meanings by constructing or reconstructing knowledge born out of practical experience. The data collected from this approach was then triangulated to answer the research question. As further discussed by Remenyi *et al.* (2000) and Arksey (1999), this multiple evidence-collection method and use of multiple informants and cases assisted in testing and retesting the degree of 'fit' between data and interpretation to overcome the problems of bias and to improve validity. Robson (2002:324) argued that there are four intertwined areas of bias; (i) selective attention - overcome 'by making a conscious effort to distribute your attention widely and evenly'; (ii) selective encoding - 'overcome by starting with an open mind'; (iii) selective memory - 'overcome by prompt writing-up of narratives and field notes'; and (iv) interpersonal factors - possibly through differing levels of engagement with multi-actor groups. Triangulation, therefore, brought a focused approach to my research objectives and enabled a robust evaluation of key issues. The empirical focus for this methodology was a multi-actor case study that was identified as representative of environmental partnerships and accessible due to researcher embeddedness. The next section discusses this case study.

3.3 Case Study Approach

The MTPN provided the empirical focus for this study due to its actors' inclusion in the various levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum (see Figure 3.1) i.e. it contained numerous actors from the government, QUANGO, third and private sectors. To address this study's objectives, the MTPN case study provided an empirical focus through the study of:

- How non-state actors are increasingly accepting responsibility for the delivery of EPPP
- Whether its third sector actors are legitimate vehicles for the delivery of state EPPP
- The accountability of MTPN partnerships to funders and stakeholders
- The practical issues that environmental partnerships must address in order to become effective delivery vehicles for EPPP.

3.3.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Case Study Approach

Case study research involves the study of individual cases over time (longitudinal analysis) using a number of data collection and analysis methods (Sarantakos, 1998). Yin (1991:23) defines case study research as 'An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used'. Yin listed five distinguishing characteristics differentiating case studies from other research methods:

1. They study whole units in their totality and not aspects or variables of these units
2. They employ several methods primarily to avoid or prevent errors and distortions
3. They often study a single unit and one unit is often one study
4. It perceives the respondent as an expert, not just a source of data
5. It studies a typical case

The MTPN case study analysed partnerships including public, QUANGO, third and private sector actors. It was largely set within the geographical boundary of the South West of England, with some wider UK actors included. The multi-actor nature of the network avoided a narrow focus on a particular type of actor i.e. QUANGOs, and presented a sufficient number of cases to enable generalised conclusions and a robust development of theory (Yin, 1993). Figure 3.1 presents this study's stratification of the MTPN as a multi-layered EPPP implementation model adopted by the state. This hierarchy of networks conceptualises how EPPP are formulated at the state level, with responsibility for delivery then devolved downwards to non-state actors (see also Section 9.3 re: the 'thickening of the state').

EPPP		
Formulation (state)	1	PUBLIC¹⁵
	2	QUANGO
Delivery (non-state)	3	THIRD SECTOR
	4	PRIVATE SECTOR

Figure 3.1 The Policy Implementation Continuum

Adapted from Winter (1990) in Wilson *et al.* (1999)

This model has been influenced by implementation theory employed by Wilson *et al.* (1999:186), where layers within which the 'political and administrative processes that occur between a policy decision and its eventual outcome in practice' are discussed. Their discussion, adapted from Winter (1990), is a response to the arguments that policy implementation is either 'top-down', 'in-between' or 'bottom-up'. They argued that the three are combined and, therefore, all have their own value due to the constant reinterpretation of policy goals, definition of measures and delivery frameworks. This is a key discussion in this research,

¹⁵ In this context: multi-layered and multi-faceted i.e. all elected actors engaged in the act of governing, such as Whitehall, Regional Assemblies, Regional Development Agencies, County and District Councils, and National Park Authorities.

whereby partnerships are argued to be multi-actor and cross-sector (Wilson *et al.*, 1999). As a member of the third sector, Moor Trees sits in level 3, though the wider MTPN spans each level. Having considered the case study approach, the next section discusses the rationale for the selection of Moor Trees and its partnership network as the case study for this thesis.

3.3.2 Why Moor Trees?

The environmental sector contains a large number of organisations and individuals, all of which play a role in the governing of the environment and most being involved in some form of partnership-working. The MTPN was chosen for the following reasons.

1. My embeddedness as researcher-practitioner presented me with not only privileged access to, and insights into, partnership-working, but also the opportunity of changing and improving the Moor Trees network, thus enabling a participatory, action research approach to partnership networks - methods that are discussed in the next section.
2. Geographically, the network is based in and around Dartmoor, but its network stretches across the South West. As such, it demonstrates how Moor Trees has scaled the activities of a quintessentially local organisation to achieve regional impact.
3. The Government Office of the South West reports the South West to be the leading region in the UK for its environmental awareness, sustainability objectives and conservation targets. As such, the associated actors are numerous and diverse, within the region, and provide established environmental partnerships as case studies.
4. As a woodland charity, Moor Trees' main activity is tree-planting (see Chapter 4 for more detailed discussion). The last three years, however, have seen the organisation

adapt to a changing working environment caused by the rising profile of the third sector (see Appendix A). This adaptation has been made possible through partnership-working and provides an example of how environmental actors are diversifying their activities in response to market opportunities and new funding streams. Thus, Moor Trees provides an example of a voluntary and community sector organisation that has adapted itself to, not just become part of, but to actually create its own environmental partnership networks.

5. Moor Trees provided further opportunities for this research due its multi-dimensional nature. Established in 1998 to restore native woodland on Dartmoor, diversification has led to new, private sector partnerships, with organisations increasingly seeking socio-environmental credentials. Further, the rising profile of climate change and sustainable development have brought new dimensions to Moor Trees' activities in the last 5 years, with new corporate responsibility, carbon offsetting, environmental education and training programmes created. This has led to an increasingly diverse range of actors joining the MTPN, which provided a broader and more generalisable range of data. As a result of this, Moor Trees and its partnership network provide a good example of an environmental actor working within a partnership-driven environment.

3.4 Participant Observation and Action Research

The potential of participatory research projects is highly dependent on the flexibility and openness of the research design so that the research subjects' needs and wishes as well as their interests and abilities can be taken into account. This study was primarily ethnographic and based on an action research approach, where my embeddedness enabled me to learn 'about society through efforts to change it' and aimed to understand the perspectives of actors

and networks under study and observe their activities in everyday life (Hoggart *et al.*, 2002:292). Thus, action research and participant observation brought 'together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001:1). This was carried out via my employment as part-time Director of Moor Trees where I observed group communication and interaction through my dual role as researcher-practitioner, which was played overtly and with the consent of other actors. As Cook (in Flowerdew and Martin, 2005) noted, this approach provides an understanding of society from the 'inside', with Robson (2002) concurring that a key feature of participant observation is that the researcher becomes a member of the research group with a specific role. Yin (1994:87) highlights this distinction as:

'A special mode of observation in which you are not merely a passive observer. Instead, you may assume a variety of roles within a case study situation and may actually participate in the events being studied'.

Action research is seen by Hoggart *et al.* (2002) as the researcher playing an active role. It has the purpose of effecting change in the lives of the people studied and to change society or at least establish causation by gauging reactions when a 'stimulus' (e.g. aim to change and improve Moor Trees' partnership networks) is deliberately introduced into a social situation (see Section 3.8.2 regarding attention to my positionality). Silverman (1985:104) similarly defines participant observation as a method that shares 'in people's lives while attempting to learn their symbolic world' and will vary from 'complete participation to the complete observer'. He further argued that participant observation involves taking the viewpoint of those studied and understanding the situated character and associated social processes of the interaction to generate formal theories grounded in first-hand data. Participant observation, therefore, is characterised by observing social communication and interaction in 'an unstructured and natural manner, where the design is developed and modified while

observation is carried out, in a face-face relationship, and in an open and flexible way' (Sarantakos, 1998:218).

According to Gan (1982:54) there are three different types of roles for the participant observer; the *total participant* who is completely involved in the situation he / she is studying, the *researcher participant* who is only partially involved, and the *total researcher* who observes a situation without significant personal involvement. Eyles and Smith (1982:9) elaborate on this theory by discussing how a researcher should be both 'inside and outside of the study group(s), institution or community under investigation and must be immersed but be able to remain a critical commentator able to see a complete pattern or process with daily or routine interactions or events'. It is also important to consider that the degree of participant engagement (from 'no participation to full participation' (Sarantakos, 1998:208)) may also bring unrepresentative results due to personalities and bias. Denzin (1978) also argued that the very presence of the observer (researcher) may influence the situation (see also comments in Section 3.2.1 regarding staff bias). This study addressed these potential weaknesses via its multi-method approach and triangulation of data, an approach favoured by Denzin (1970:186) who argued that participant observation weaknesses can be overcome by using 'a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, respondent and informant interviewing, direct participation and observation and introspection'.

Flowerdew and Martin (2005) suggested that participant observation has three stages: (i) access to the communities; (ii) role within the communities; and (iii) academic interpretation of data. This method enables the researcher to work within a community both to observe and participate in activities and dialogue to question and understand events that are occurring. It enabled this study to unravel the relationships between actors and their networks. A key question regarding this type of research is posed by Moser and Kalton (1971:249) who ask 'What is the best role of the observer (researcher) in the community?' There is no simple

answer to this question, but one must take into account the skills of the researcher, the type of community and the type of data required. For this study, action research was conducted via overt participant observation, where I worked openly within the MTPN as researcher-practitioner. This enabled me to understand how the network worked from the inside whilst retaining an objective outsider's view (see Section 3.8.3 regarding objectivity). However, Moser and Kalton (1971) argued that a bigger and less naturally restricted community means that some of the members lose awareness that they are being observed and therefore exhibit more 'authentic' behaviour and no 'control effect' that new community members can sometimes apply. Whilst this can lead to improved data validity, there are issues regarding ethics and anonymity, as it may be seen as synonymous with covert participation (see Section 3.8.1 regarding ethical standards). Thus, I was presented with the decision whether to make myself known to all actors being studied. I addressed this by presenting my researcher-practitioner status at the beginning and end of the online survey and interviews, and at the scheduling and then 'personal introductions' stage of any MTPN meetings that I was observing or working within. This provided actors with the opportunity to withdraw at any time or to request data not to be used for my research. None withdrew or requested the restricted use of data, but anonymity was requested by some. This was honoured by coding sheets for both online survey responses and interviews.

My presence may have created an unavoidable bias to group proceedings, though I countered this through data triangulation and by adapting my qualitative framework during observation (Sarantakos, 1998). Thus, participant observation is a highly individual technique that, if not done correctly, can; (i) present a biased and unrepresentative picture through case study manipulation, and (ii) collect data from actors that have become self-conscious and untypical - both issues that need to be actively addressed throughout the data collection process. However, the observation process does bring the advantages of; (i) number and diversity of informants; (ii) the means to study a whole system (network) with subsequent checking

against individual contributions (by interview); (iii) access to data otherwise not made publicly available; and (iv) insightfulness into interpersonal behaviour and motives (Moser and Kalton, 1971; Yin, 1994).

The next section discusses the use of secondary data as a methodological tool to triangulate findings from this study.

3.5 Secondary Data

It is the natural inclination of the researcher to gather new data to meet research aims and objectives (Hair *et al.*, 2007). Researchers should, however, also see if data are already available to answer, or contribute to answering or provide context to, the research question. If they exist, secondary data may then provide efficient, valid and sources of both quantitative and qualitative information that saves time, effort and expense in spite of the fact that the data may not have been originally collected with the research question in mind.

3.5.1 Types and Sources

Researchers like to think their idea of a research project is original, assuming that relevant data has not yet have been collected by anyone else. Methodologically, therefore, the use of secondary data requires critical reading because such 'information has been collected by someone else, for another purpose' and 'may already have been manipulated for particular, possibly political, purposes' (White, 2003:68). Similarly, Clark (1997:58) argued that the utilisation of secondary data needs to take into account that it 'is a cultural artefact, produced for administrators with priorities and ways of seeing the world' and that it 'reflects the aims and attitudes of the people and organisations that collected the data'. But 'old' data can often make an important contribution to original research (Babbie, 2007; Montell and Sutton, 2006;

Rubin and Babbie, 2001). Indeed, the availability of these secondary data can sometimes influence the nature of the research, with the rationale for secondary analysis of existing datasets including the economies of time, money and personnel (Hakim, 1982; Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Hakim (1982) further argued that secondary analysis includes studies presenting any or all of the following:

- More condensed reports (such as a social area analysis based on selected social indicators);
- more detailed reports (offering additional detail on the same topic);
- reports which focus on a particular sub-topic or social group;
- analyses based on a conceptual framework or theory not applied to the original analysis; and
- re-analyses which take advantage of more sophisticated analytical techniques.

Secondary analysis can also be done within a shorter timetable than a new study if results are needed quickly i.e. reanalysis of existing census or survey data to complement literature reviews. However, the researcher must feel comfortable that the data are reliable and that the source is known. Scott (1990, see also Hoggart *et al.*, 2002) argued that a researcher must assess its usefulness against four themes; (1) *Authenticity* (is the source correctly attributed?); (2) *Credibility* (did the recorder believe in what was recorded?); (3) *Representativeness* (is the source representative of opinion at that time and place?); and (4). *Meaning* (should the source be used in a literal sense?). The researcher should, therefore, pay careful attention when using secondary data sources to identify what is, and is not, relevant (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Jacob (1984:45) concurred:

‘Whether data are found in libraries or data archives, they should not be viewed simply as providing grand opportunities for cheap analyses: they should be seen as

problematic. In every case the analyst should ask: Are these data valid? In what ways might they have been contaminated so that they are unreliable?’

Secondary analysis can be used as an additional tool for new research. For example, secondary analysis of an organisation’s policy documents or reports can be used for the preliminary investigation of an issue for further exploration in survey and / or interview work. May (1993) argued that secondary data sources can be classified as

- *Primary sources* that have been recorded by those who actually witnessed an event, thus representing knowledge by acquaintance.
- *Secondary sources* that have been recorded after the event by second parties. The recorder, therefore, has no personal experience of the event itself.
- *Tertiary sources* that enable one to locate other sources i.e. indexes, bibliographies.

I accessed secondary data via my role as researcher-practitioner. As researcher, I sourced data to contribute to the study. As practitioner, I already had access to a large amount of secondary data. Interestingly, without exception, all further documentation that I requested from MTPN actors (that was not already available online) was also made available. These sources included public and some private data. Scott (1990) categorised these sources as closed, restricted, open-archival and open-published. This study identified and then collated data from a number of sources:

- *Public documents* (promotional / technical literature / media)
- *Archival records* (organisation records, annual reports)
- *Personal documents* (memoranda, blogs)
- *Administrative documents* (memoranda, progress reports, agendas, minutes)
- *Formal studies and reports* (relating to the research topic)

(Sarantakos, 1998)

Analysis of MTPN actor documentation included annual reports, state policy documentation, press releases, conference proceedings and minutes from various meetings. This secondary data played an important role in the preparation of interviews and for situating the primary data from the interviews in a broader context (Clark, 1997:59). Documents were collected in electronic format, enabling a fairly simple quantitative analysis to be carried out by searching for key words including; 'community', 'stakeholder', 'participation', 'partnership', 'accountability', 'responsibility', and 'legitimacy'. When words were identified in a document, the context was analysed so as to ensure that it related to this study. This analysis helped guide the structure of the interview process, where interviewees were questioned regarding employer attitudes and beliefs towards partnership-working compared to the realities of its application 'in the field'. For example, an organisation's company report stating that it worked in partnership could then be compared retrospectively to the responses given at interview regarding the realities of policy implementation.

3.5.2 Strengths and Weaknesses

The accessibility of secondary data for this research was primarily via the online publications of actor reports, policy documents, management plans, minutes and publicity material. The retrospective analysis of these secondary data proved to be an important factor when comparing individual vs. organisational attitudes and beliefs towards partnership-working. These documents, created for non-research purposes, reduced researcher bias and provided a low cost source of high quality data to triangulate against the findings from the other research methods utilised by this study. This study did, however, identify some of the inherent weaknesses with secondary data. The main one was author subjectivity, with much of this data generated by actors reporting or communicating on their own activities. For example, private sector actor annual reports frequently published data regarding their partnership-working with third sector actors as part of their corporate responsibility programmes. Without wider

investigation and cross-referencing, these data were occasionally difficult to validate due to the lack of third party verification. The representativeness and sampling of secondary data were also considered throughout the study, by ensuring that 20 articles and / or documents were sourced from each of the four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum i.e. public, QUANGO, third and private sectors.

There are also ethical issues underlying the use of secondary data. Hair *et al.* (2007:138) summarised this as 'inappropriately using these sources when you should not, and inappropriately not using them when you should'. Secondary sources should not be used surreptitiously as a way of avoiding research effort. This is important when there is a misalignment of purpose and the sourced data cannot be expected to address the research problem in an unbiased fashion. Confidentiality and exclusivity should be respected at all times and researchers should confirm that data gathered and analysed for a particular survey may be used as a secondary source for another one. Section 3.8 deals with these ethical issues in greater depth.

3.6 Questionnaires

'Questionnaires are one of the most widely used primary data collection tools in social science, especially human geography' (Sarantakos, 1998:223).

It is widely acknowledged that questionnaires are an important tool for collecting qualitative and quantitative data on respondent attitudes, opinions and awareness on specific issues (Flowerdew and Martin, 1997; May, 1997; Philip, 1998; Sarantakos, 1998). Questionnaires can be completed by researcher or respondent and include postal, street or online.

Table 3.1 shows the advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative and quantitative approaches to social research. It shows how quantitative data provides an economical and controlled method for data collection, with analysis often carried out electronically. This method struggles to adapt to the needs of collecting data on social phenomenon i.e. respondent opinions, attitudes and beliefs. It is this weakness that is strength of the qualitative approach, where discourse can unravel complex issues and the researcher is able to adapt the questions to the respondent. This does, however, bring implications regarding the complexities and greater amount of time required to collate and analyse data.

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Advantages	Economical data collection. Clear theoretical focus. Greater control of research process. Easily comparable data.	Facilitates understanding: how / why Researcher aware of changes during research process. Understanding of social processes.
Disadvantages	Lack of flexibility when collection started. Weak at understanding social processes. May not discover meanings people attach to social phenomena.	Data collection can be time consuming. Data analysis is difficult. Clear patterns may not emerge. Generally perceived as less credible by 'non-researchers'.

Table 3.1: Quantitative and Qualitative approaches to Social Research

Adapted from Saunders *et al.* (1997:74)

3.6.1 Questionnaire Development and Design

Surveys are almost a part of everyday life and should be constructed to minimise excessive intrusion into a respondent's day, not waste their time and must be treated with sensitivity (Flowerdew and Martin, 1997; Sarantakos, 1998). The researcher should also consider the following three types of data that need to be collected:

1. Respondent Classification

Classifies respondents, their circumstances and their environment. Also referred to as respondent variables, this can include data such as employer, job title and location.

2. Respondent Behaviour

These data relate to respondent behavioural trends i.e. *how often, how much, how long*. Whilst the answers to these questions should provide reliable and valid results, there is a danger that the behaviour(s) expressed at interview may differ significantly from actual behaviour. Smith (2006:917) sees this as 'social desirability bias or prestige bias, whereby respondents may want to answer survey questions based not on their true feelings, but on the desire to present themselves in the most favourable manner possible i.e. within social.'

3. Respondent Attitudes, Opinions and Beliefs

Parfitt (1997:77) discussed the challenges of the variability and occasionally subjective nature of responses to questionnaires, the potential for 'attitude-forcing' (through questionnaire structuring and researcher prompting) and insincerity (by the respondent wanting to please or to fit the perceived norm). Robson (1993) and Judd *et al.* (1991) also argue that respondents with strong opinions on the research question - particularly negative ones - are more likely to respond.

Surveys can be 'descriptive' or 'analytic'. The former typically deals with opinion polls, population estimates or predominantly numbers-based data, typically on a large scale. Analytical surveys focus on explanations and causality, with one of the aims often being to establish associations between variables. As such, they are more frequently used by the academic community and were used in this study.

(i) Initial research idea: refine and develop analytic design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of research aims and objectives • Literature review / secondary data sources • How much is known already?
(ii) Design of research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypotheses formation: basic research design • Consider dependent, independent, controlled variables • Choice of survey methodology: internet, postal, telephone, personal interview? • Researcher- or self-administered? • Drafting questionnaire
(iii) Further refinement of research instrument and sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot work • Post-pilot questionnaire revision • Sampling: sampling frame • Sampling bias assessment • Consider systematic / purposive techniques
(iv) Main fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response rate assessment
(v) Processing / analysis of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data processing control, manual edit checks, data coding • Questionnaire / PC transcription of data • Machine edit checks • Statistical analysis and tabulation of results
(vi) Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results, hypotheses testing • Research report

Table 3.2: The Six Stages of a Questionnaire Survey

Adapted from Parfitt (1997:80)

Table 3.2 shows the six stages of a questionnaire survey. It outlines the process from; (i) the development of the initial research question and identification of the knowledge gap; to (ii) the initial development of the research methodology; to (iii) the piloting and refinement of the methods to be used i.e. questionnaire type and style, researcher or respondent-administered, etc. Step (iv) is the fieldwork stage where the researcher collects data and assesses response rates. This is followed by Step (v) when the data are checked, analysed statistically or by using a qualitative technique. Finally, Step (vi) finalises results and produces the research report, possibly including recommendations for future research. Questionnaires can become too long, so attention is needed to format, sequencing and wording. Survey length is also important to avoid respondent fatigue (Flowerdew and Martin, 1997). It is important to understand the

types of errors that can affect the reliability (can the results be replicated?) and validity (does the survey measure what it is intended to do?) of results (Flowerdew and Martin, 1997).

3.6.2 Questionnaire Wording and Format

After assuring respondents of anonymity and confidentiality, the questionnaire should engage the respondent by using meaningful questions; reflect the research question or hypotheses under investigation; and produce results that will meet the research aims and objectives. The researcher's ability to empathise with the respondents will reduce bias by engaging at a level that is accessible, enthusing and relevant to the respondent. Furthermore, language complexity and structure needs to be pitched at a level suitable for the target audience and the flow of a questionnaire needs to keep the respondent engaged in sub-topics. These points can be addressed through a suitable introductory statement that engages the respondent and clarifies the questionnaire's purpose. The online survey for this study (see Section 3.6.3) was able to address these issues through the researcher's experience as practitioner, especially when considering language and accessibility.

Choosing either open or closed question formats differentiates between quantitative or qualitative results and influences survey results and interpretation techniques. Open questions tend to inspire spontaneous and more honest responses due to their more engaging nature, though analysis will be longer and more complex. Closed questions are easier to ask, take less time to complete and are easier to answer and quantify. This study adopted a mainly closed approach, using a five point Likert Scale (see Figure 3.2) for many questions, though with room for an open response ('additional comments') at the end of each survey sub-section. When constructing these scales, I overcame a potential patterning effect by respondents by mixing the 'positive' and 'negative' ends of the scale. This approach was more complex but aided the subsequent identification of themes for further exploration during the semi-structured

interview process. These attitudes and opinions were the most difficult data to collect due to fluctuating attitudes and difficulties in creating suitable measurements (Flowerdew and Martin, 1997). The survey also presented the challenge of delineating between the subjective attitudes and opinions of an individual and the same individual's behaviour when working as an employee. This was addressed in the questionnaire by stating that responses should be representative of the organisation and not the respondent (see Appendix B). It should be accepted, however, that a degree of subjectivity exists in any opinion, attitude or belief.

Financial Accountability	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	4.1 Environmental partnerships are usually supported by Government grants	1	2	3	4

Figure 3.2: Likert Scale format

Source: Author's Questionnaire

3.6.3 Online Surveys

Before the advent of the world-wide web, questionnaire surveys were predominantly carried out in person, by post or by telephone. *Personal surveys* benefit from close contact and researcher / respondent interaction, *post surveys* enable a more remote contact and *telephone surveys* fall in between the two (Alreck and Settle, 1995; Evans and Mathur, 2005; Flowerdew and Martin, 1997; Hoggart *et al.*, 2002). It is important to consider the constraints that can be imposed by social science research i.e. bias, budgets, timescales, geographical spread and questionnaire design expertise. Since the availability of the web, electronic surveys can be conducted through email or, as with this study, posted online with the URL provided to respondents who have already been approached or are already known to the researcher to save time and money (Duffy *et al.*, 2005; Evans and Mathur, 2005; Griffith *et al.*, 2003; Ilieva *et*

al., 2002; Schaefer and Dillman, 1998; Scholl *et al.*, 2002). Granello and Wheaton (2004:388) summarise the benefits of online surveys as

'...reduced response time, lower cost, ease of data entry, flexibility of and control over format, advances in technology, recipient acceptance of the format, and the ability to obtain additional response-set information.'

Braunsberger *et al.* (2007:758) argued that online surveys '...can produce more reliable data estimates than telephone surveys and that, web panels are cheaper and less time consuming to conduct than telephone surveys'. As early as 1998, Schaefer and Dillman suggested that participant responses in electronic surveys can be more detailed and comprehensive than paper-and-pencil surveys (though at that time there were still issues regarding limited internet access and high costs¹⁶). This was further discussed by Taylor (2000, in Duffy and Smith, 2005) and Evans and Mathur (2005), who suggested that they offer *flexible* solutions, appeal to *consumer* and *business*, technologically-innovative *feature rich formats* (thus, improving respondent engagement via a more visual, flexible and interactive design), *convenience*¹⁷, and *ease of data entry and analysis*. It is also argued that they remove *researcher bias*, which can become a problem in personal surveys and semi-structured interviews (Granello and Wheaton, 2004; Evans and Mathur, 2005; Duffy *et al.*, 2005). Surveys can, however, be perceived as junk mail and appear impersonal. This was overcome by the personalised email approach.

3.6.4 Online Survey Design and Wording in the Context of this Study

A questionnaire needs to be context-related, whilst still operationalising research aims and objectives into general themes and questions that produce measurable variables for

¹⁶ 9% of UK adult population had home internet access in 1998. This increased to 52% by 2004 and, in February 2005, 59% of UK adults had used the internet (National Statistics Omnibus Survey 2005, in Duffy *et al.*, 2005:615).

¹⁷ This argument was supported by the high (77%) response rate for this study's online survey.

quantitative and qualitative analysis (DeVellis, 1991). This study's survey assumed that respondents were familiar with the concept of partnership-working but less familiar with the issues of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability. To allow for this, questions regarding the latter provided a little more detail regarding explanation of the topic. In addition to the main themes representing the aim and objectives of this research, the survey defined *respondent classification* by collecting data on organisation type, location, staff size and environmental sub-sector. Thus, the questionnaire layout was as follows (see Appendix E for list of questions):

Section 1: Organisational Profile (*respondent classification*)

Section 2: Partnerships

Section 3: Responsibility

Section 4: Legitimacy

Section 5: Accountability

Section 6: The Voluntary Carbon Offset Market

The questionnaire design then required questions that identified basic trends for more complex exploration through personal interview (see Section 3.7). This meant a mainly closed question approach, which yielded the following advantages:

- (i) Reduced survey completion time to 20 minutes. (Duffy *et al.* (2005) argue that respondent fatigue starts after approximately 18);
- (ii) Eased statistical analysis of respondent *classification, behaviour, attitudes, opinions and beliefs* (Gill and Johnson, 1991; de Vaus, 1996); and
- (iii) Reduced the opportunity for researcher subjectivity and bias when interpreting closed question responses (de Vaus, 1996; Gill and Johnson, 1991).

This approach took place primarily by collecting ordinal data¹⁸ using five-point Likert attitudinal scales (DeVellis 1991; de Vaus, 1996; Oppenheim, 1992). This provided a format that needed less effort from the respondent to complete (Couper *et al.*, 2001). See Figure 3.2 for example. The information provided by Likert scales was sufficient to identify the basic themes for more detailed exploration at the semi-structured interview stage.

3.6.5 Online Survey Sampling

Having discussed the construction of the survey and survey questions, this section considers the sampling and delivery process, including identification of the survey *population* and the subsequent selection of the sample (Babbie, 1989; de Vaus, 1996; Oppenheim, 1992). The target population was the MTPN which consisted of 400 entities collated from my practitioner knowledge and networks. One reason for the focus on this network was that this study of environmental partnerships required associated actors, as a randomly sampled population from within ‘the environmental sector’ may have led to interviewees being selected that had no partnership knowledge or experience. Combined with my own personalised approach at survey and interview stages, this reduced the number of non-respondents who could have distorted the final results (Williamson 1981, in Barriball and While 1994).

	Sampling Universe	Target Sample	Responses
Government	59	29	26 (86%)
QUANGOs	95	48	24 (50%)
Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS)	131	66	60 (90%)
Private sector	115	57	44 (77%)
Total:	400	200	154 (77%)

Table 3.3: Stratified Random Sample of Survey Population

Table 3.3 shows how the population was stratified into four distinctive actor layers, as per the Policy Implementation Continuum (see Figure 3.1). This stratification ensured respondent

¹⁸ Due to the Likert scales assigning data to ordered categories.

groups accurately reflected the composition of the target population (Ebdon, 1985; Oppenheim, 1992). *Stratified random sampling* was then used to identify the final sample of 200. This was carried out by dividing the total population by the required sample to choose every 2nd entity (Couper, 2000; de Vaus, 1996). A response rate of 154 (77%) was achieved from the sample.

Having discussed the sampling technique applied to this survey, the next section considers the pilot study.

3.6.6 Online Survey Piloting

Converse and Presser (1986, in Sarantakos, 1996) argued that a pilot survey should answer four questions:

1. *Do the questions fit together?*
2. *Do respondents skip non-filter questions?*
3. *Is the questionnaire too long for respondents to endure?*
4. *Do some sections need to be cut or adapted?*

As a small-scale replica and a rehearsal of the main survey, the pilot aimed to 'discover possible weaknesses, inadequacies, ambiguities and problems...so that they can be corrected before actual data collection takes place' (Sarantakos, 1998:293). It improved question phrasing, evaluated the respondent interpretation of meanings, and corrected technical problems¹⁹ in delivery and administration (de Vaus, 1996; Granello and Wheaton, 2004;

¹⁹ An additional aim of the pilot study is to have respondents submit the survey from a variety of computers and to be able to target respondents with varying degrees of technological expertise, especially novice (Granello and Wheaton, 2004).

Sarantakos, 1998; Wyatt, 2000). The pilot study also included four questions that were excluded from the main survey:

1. Questionnaire length - asked to select 1 of 3 options - 'Too short', 'Right length', or 'Too long', plus text box for comment
2. Questionnaire structure - text box for comment
3. The flow of the questions - text box for comment
4. Language complexity - asked to select 1 of 3 options - 'Too simple', 'About right', or 'Too complex', plus text box for comment

The undeclared²⁰ pilot study was conducted with 20 known individuals who were directed to the survey URL²¹ via a personalised email (see Appendix C) and / or telephone call. The pilot study respondents were a sub-set of the target population, with the data collected also used in the final analysis (Granello and Wheaton, 2004). Data submitted from completed surveys were then stored in a text file for importing into spreadsheet format²². There was a 100% response rate from the pilot study, with no firm recommendations for changes to the questionnaire. As such, the survey design and structure were retained for the remainder of the sampling frame.

3.6.7 Online Survey Delivery, Administration and Data Analysis

On completion of the pilot study, the remaining 180 respondents in the sampling frame were contacted by personal email. Whilst this is more time-consuming than a generic mailing, it was found that my status as practitioner improved engagement by potential respondents and contributed to the high response rate. The survey asked for respondent name, organisation

²⁰ See Moser and Kalton (1971), De Vaus (1996) and Breakwell (1995) regarding undisclosed pilot studies.

²¹ www.ssb.plymouth.ac.uk/surveys/EnvPartnerships/ – developed using Perseus software

²² The spreadsheet was hosted online by the University of Plymouth at:

https://webmail.plymouth.ac.uk/owa/redir.aspx?URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.ssb.plymouth.ac.uk%2fpdc_data%2fEnvPartnerships.tsv

name and email address, thus enabling the monitoring of responses to contact non-respondents. The survey also asked if respondents would be willing to take part in the interview stage and those who wanted to receive an executive summary of the thesis. As discussed in Section 3.8.1, assurances regarding anonymity outside of the research were made in the survey (Couper, 2000; Duffy *et al.*, 2005; Evans and Mathur, 2005; Granello and Wheaton, 2004; Ilieva *et al.*, 2002; Oppenheim, 1992; Taylor *et al.*, 2005). Anonymity improves credibility by encouraging respondents to be more truthful and may have also contributed to the high response rate²³ (Kellner, 2004; Lefever *et al.*, 2007). The survey was published on the internet and accessible to all, i.e. it had no password-restricted entry. Administration of survey results was automated, with data being sent to a pre-arranged online location for storage in a Tab Separated Values (TSV) file. The TSV file stored data in a table arranged in columns and separated by tabs. This file was then imported into Microsoft Excel for analysis (Archer, 2004; Evans and Mathur, 2005; Ilieva *et al.*, 2002; Lefever *et al.*, 2007). More complex analysis could have been carried out by using SPSS, a more advanced tool to collect, analyse, interpret and present data. However, this survey collected data requiring simple analysis to identify themes for in-depth exploration at interview stage (discussed in next Section, 3.6). For this study, therefore, Perseus was used to identify of clusters, trends and possible correlations. Respondents were clustered as per Figure 3.3:

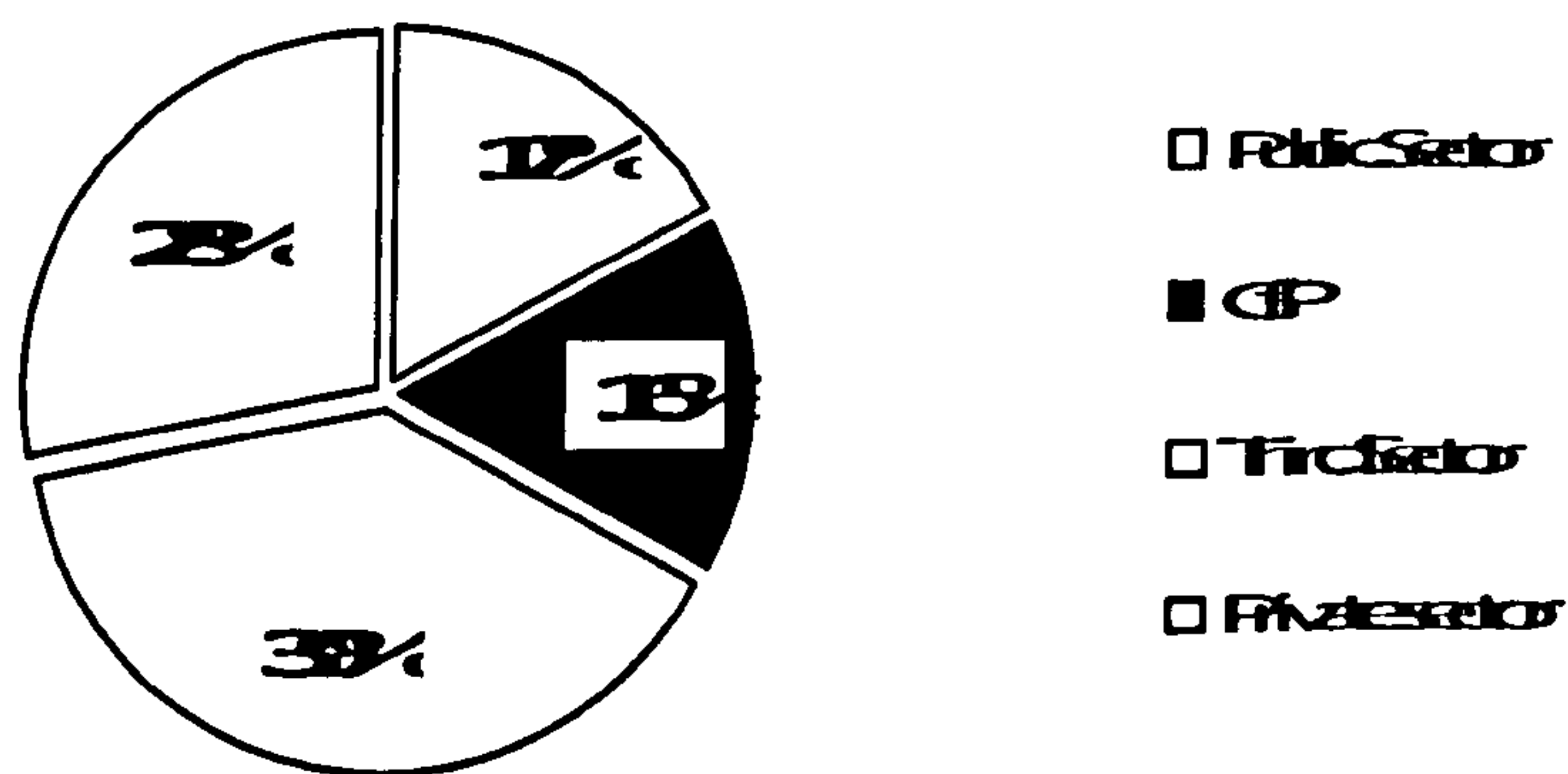


Figure 3.3: Online Survey Response Clusters

Source: Author's Questionnaire

²³ Denzin (1989) argued that a low response rate can lead to an unrepresentative sample.

3.7 Semi-structured interviews

3.7.1 Interviews as a Research Tool

'Qualitative interviewing and analysis techniques have increasingly been used within published research in recent years to obtain a more detailed and flexible understanding of individuals' beliefs, perceptions, and accounts relating to particular issues' (Lloyd *et al.*, 2006:1386).

Denzin (1989:102) argues that interviews are the 'favourite digging tool of the sociologist'. Interviews have also been defined by the likes of Berg (2001) and Eyles and Smith (1988) as conversation with the purpose of gathering information through social interaction (see also Babbie, 1989; de Santis, 1980). Interviewing is a form of questioning characterised by verbal questioning as its principal technique of data collection with constructed format being used to give an analytically defined perspective (Silverman, 1973, 1998). Thus, this research tool's strength lies in its ability to focus on the research question *in situ* and the subsequent analysis of *how* people do things. Together with questionnaires, interviews are frequently used as part of multi-method approaches (Sarantakos, 1998; Valentine in Flowerdew and Martin, 1997:112). Breakwell (1995) argued that, as a highly flexible research tool, they can be used at any stage in the research process i.e. at an early stage to identify areas for further exploration (as per this study), for piloting and validation of other research instruments, as the main vehicle for data collection, or at the final stage to check whether interpretations of other data make sense of the sample. Whilst interviews are common place in everyday life, they are different when used as a social research tool or as a method of data collection. Sarantakos (1998:246) argued that this is:

'...due to their preparation, construction and execution, first because it is prepared and executed in a systematic way, second because it is controlled by the researcher to avoid bias and distortion, and third due to the fact that it is related to a specific research question and a specific purpose.'

Interviews are generally unstructured or semi-structured, take a flexible and conversational form, and may vary according to the interests, experiences and views of the interviewees. This flexibility, Willig (2001) argued, gives the opportunity to provide access to meanings, perspectives and interpretations, to embrace individual differences, and to be sensitive to diverse forms of expression. This enables a dialogue rather than an interrogation, and provides a sensitive and people-oriented approach that allows interviewees to build accounts of their experiences by describing and explaining them in their own words (Valentine, in Flowerdew and Martin, 1997). In addition, the interviewer has the chance to ask the same questions in different ways in order to explore selected issues more thoroughly, enabling interviewees to explain the complexities and contradictions of their everyday lives (Bryman, 1988). Another strength of the interview approach is that it allows respondents to raise issues that the interviewer may not have anticipated, thus generating rich, detailed and multi-layered material, and producing a 'deeper picture' than a questionnaire survey (Burgess, 1984; Silverman, 1985 and 1993:15). Thus, it is argued that these advantages have led to a broadening of the role and significance of interviews in research (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Gubrium and Holstein 2002; Silverman 1997), while Kvale (1996) adds that the human interaction of the interview itself produces scientific knowledge.

3.7.2 Interview Types

Rubin and Rubin (1995) identify three major categories of interviews:

- Standardised, also referred to as formal, or structured;
- Unstandardised, also referred to as informal, or non-directive; and
- Semi-standardised, also referred to as semi-structured.

Standardised interviews gather information using formally structured and predetermined questions. They offer fewer variables and, therefore, offer easier comparisons (Babbie, 1995). Unstandardised interviews do not utilise schedules of questions and work on the basis that the interviewer sets out knowing that he / she will adapt / create questions throughout the interview. The interviewer also assumes that not all interviewees will find the same meaning in the questions posed. Thus, the interviewee needs the 'skill to develop, adapt and generate' questions and follow-up probes (Berg 1995:61). According to Burgess (1982:101), probing uncovers new clues, opens up new dimensions of a problem and secures vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts from informants based on personal experiences. This approach enabled me to gain additional information regarding phenomena observed during the interview process and helped to establish rapport with interviewees, especially when there was an initial lack of familiarity. Semi-standardised interviews also allowed me to digress from the predetermined set of questions. This gives the opportunity to probe beyond initial interviewee responses and offers a potentially richer and more intimate set of data. This resulted from interviewees' elaborations following unexpected probes. For example:

Scheduled Question: Have you ever worked in a partnership programme?
Respondent answer: 'Yes'
Scheduled probe: How did you find it?

This format enabled me to engage further with the interviewee while also reflecting an awareness of the interviewee's world. I adopted this approach for two main reasons; (i) the survey had identified specific themes to be explored through interview, so a structure had to

be implemented to achieve these aims by guiding the interview discussion; and (ii) I needed to be able to ask spontaneous questions in response to unexpected points made by the respondent. This second point was particularly pertinent as most respondents were known to me as practitioner and therefore presented opportunities for a relaxed and flowing dialogue borne out of mutual trust. Denzin (1989) argued that this shared background can have a positive effect by facilitating the development of a rapport between interviewer and interviewee, producing a rich, detailed conversation based on empathy and mutual respect and understanding. Thus, familiarity with background and identity encouraged a more relaxed and flowing dialogue that yielded improved results and overcame the potential for unwanted constraints or controls imposed by the interviewee.

3.7.3 Interviewee Selection

'Good interviewees...appear comfortable and unstrained in interactions with the researcher; they are generally open and truthful although they may have certain areas about which they will not speak or where they will cover up; they provide solid answers with good detail; they stay on the topic or related important issues; they are thoughtful and willing to reflect on what they say' (Dobbert, 1982, in Barriball and While, 1994:331).

Having gained data from the online survey I identified a number of themes to explore in greater detail through semi-structured interviews. I was aware that the selection of actors to interview would need to focus on a small number of motivated individuals to ensure good response rates, data validity and reliability (Oppenheim, 1992). I decided, therefore, to select interviewees from within the MTPN that I knew to be established partnership practitioners and knowledgeable of the MTPN context. A small number of these actors were, however, located outside of the South West of England due to their roles including a wider, i.e. national, remit. I

also decided to choose interviewees from within the questionnaire sample as they were familiar with the research context and would perhaps provide contrasting answers in person (verbally) compared to their written responses (see also Section 3.7.5). Five were subsequently selected from each level of the Policy Implementation Continuum leading to a total of 20 interviewees. They were not selected randomly, but by a combination of particular online responses made, known areas of activity and expertise, and availability and accessibility. This selection could be argued to be subjective, but the design process ensured that the interviewees formed a representative sample of the target population for exploring comments and themes highlighted by the online survey.

The selection of the interview location should not be a purely technical decision, as interview surroundings also potentially contribute to the interview structure (Herzog, 2005). For example, an open office environment may lead to different interviewee responses compared to a private setting. Taking this into account, I ensured that all interviews were conducted in a private and comfortable setting (Adler and Adler 2002; Berg 2001:99). Herzog (2005) and Seidman (1991) argued that this sensitivity to location is also guided by the desire for equity in the interview. This can be partly achieved through interviewer flexibility whilst at the same time taking into account the constraints of logistics. Adler and Adler (2002) also argued that the nature of the research question can also be a determining factor regarding interview location. Ultimately, however, interview location and time was often constrained by spatial or temporal circumstances, i.e. 'where' and 'when' was mutually convenient (Warren, 2002).

3.7.4 Interview Design

Unlike other methods, the interviewer is an 'instrument' that can be affected by factors like fatigue, personality, knowledge, levels of skill, training, and experience (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, in Patton, 1987). Patton (1987) pointed out that any face-to-face interview is also an

observation, with the skilled interviewer tracking non-verbal messages, interview setting, and nuances of the interviewer-interviewee relationship. While these subjective factors are sometimes considered threats to validity, they can also be strengths because the skilled interviewer can use flexibility and insight to ensure an in-depth, detailed understanding of the participant's experience. A faulty interview design would have distorted the final results, so it was important to construct an interview that was both exploratory and standardised to facilitate comparability between respondents during analysis (Denzin, 1989). This process, argued Denzin (1989), included delineating the areas of interest and relevance (themes) that should be covered by the interview. These broad areas were subsequently broken down into the following more manageable groupings:

1. Partnerships
2. Responsibility
3. Legitimacy
4. Accountability
5. Further comments

Gordon (1975) argued that the wording and sequence of all questions in a standardised interview must be exactly the same for each respondent to ensure that any differences in the answers are due to differences amongst the respondents rather than in the questions asked. Implicit in Gordon's argument is that respondents share a common vocabulary and that every word has the same meaning to every respondent (Denzin 1989). However, this argument was contested by Treece and Treece (1986, in Barriball and While, 1993:330), who argued that:

'Opportunities to change the words but not the meaning of questions provided by a semi-structured interview schedule acknowledges that not every word has the same meaning to every respondent and not every respondent uses the same vocabulary.'

Both arguments were found to have relevance, in particular regarding the ambiguity for some of the language and terminology used by both myself and interviewees. For example, when discussing 'responsibility', it was assumed on more than one occasion by interviewees that this study was referring to 'who was responsible', as opposed to the actual research theme of the state 'devolving' responsibility to non-state actors. Both are linked to the wider discussion, i.e. that the former results from the latter, but I decided to clarify this point prior to, or immediately after the start of, each discussion. A further and perhaps more crucial point to reinforce was the definition of 'governance', with a number of interviewees assuming that it referred purely to the act of governing by the state, as opposed to the concept of community-based governance approach.

3.7.5 Implementing the Semi-Structured Interview

Having identified the interviewee sample, I approached each person by telephone to make an appointment. During the call I reminded the interviewee about the nature of the research, indicated that it should take no longer than 50 minutes, and commented that the interview was one of a number of data collection methods employed. I also presented the opportunity for withdrawal, and assuring confidentiality. I received a 100% acceptance rate, with many appearing to welcome the opportunity to discuss partnership-working. I concluded that this was, for the most part, due to the topicality of the study plus the impact of the subject matter on the day-to-day activities of the interviewees. This conclusion was reinforced during the interviews, with the average interview time being 72 minutes despite the interview being set for 50 (see Appendix D). Of the 20 interviewees, 12 asked during the appointment-making process if they could have an executive summary of the thesis on completion (see also Appendix D).

Although making the appointment was a relatively straightforward task, I found that conducting the interview was more complex, especially regarding the anonymity of the interviewee. Indeed, 16 out of 20 interviewees requested that their names not be listed in the report (see Appendix D, also the attention to ethics in Section 3.8.1). This number included all five of the public sector employees (four of whom stated that from a personal perspective they did not support partnership-working, thus contradicting company policy)²⁴. This feedback also influenced my decision to down play this study's institutional sponsorship from Great Western Research (GWR) as, much to my surprise, I had previously been quizzed by a number of actors regarding the nature of the GWR sponsorship and whether I was effectively 'working for the RDA' (Regional Development Agency). I responded to those situations by confirming that funding had been secured by GWR from both the RDA *and* Moor Trees to fund research collaborations between Higher Education Institutions and local business to build international recognition to promote the growth of the region. When framed as such (as per GWR's stated aim), I found that initial reservations were withdrawn. This does, however, provide an interesting anecdote about the image and profile of the South West RDA.

I further addressed the employer / employee conundrum by requesting responses based on company policy via the online survey and including the opportunity for the interviewee to discuss their personal experiences of partnership-working during the interview. I found that this was possible due to the flexibility and responsiveness offered by the interview approach and also through my status as a trusted practitioner (de Santis, 1980). This role also enabled in-depth discussions of sub-topics that a researcher new to the sector may have found challenging. My action research experiences and findings also contributed to discussions, as did my role of observer. This dual role elicited positive responses from the interviewees, with me regularly being asked for my own opinion and suggestions regarding partnership-working, resulting in a complex *dove-tailing of action researcher and interviewer*. However, this multi-

²⁴ As mentioned in the previous section, this was also a consideration when deciding to select interviewees from the questionnaire sample i.e. to contrast written vs. Verbal responses.

faceted role was not without its own challenges, including the need to remain objective, especially when asked for my opinion. I met this challenge by constantly reverting to the interview structure so that I could remain focused on meeting the research by exploring the themes identified by the online survey.

On finishing the interview, I ensured we returned from any sector practitioner dialogue (or tangents) to our interviewer / interviewee statuses. This ensured that the conditions of anonymity, requirements for executive summary, timing the interview, etc, were all met and recorded for inclusion in the research analysis and findings.

3.7.6 Interview Analysis

I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews to obtain a more detailed understanding of particular issues highlighted by the online survey. A total of 20 recorded and then transcribed interviews provided detailed, oral accounts of MTPN actor attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards partnership-working. It differed from the survey by offering a non-quantitative appraisal of findings. This approach enabled triangulation against survey data, secondary sources and personal observations of, and action research from within, the MTPN. Triangulation met the validity and reliability criteria used within quantitative research whilst remaining sensitive to context (Lloyd *et al.*, 2006; Yardley, 2000).

I set a target of creating recording transcripts and conducting initial data analysis within seven days of each interview. I started²⁵ the analysis stage using the NVivo 8 software package, which is designed to merge and explore related data. The package is built to import, analyse and store large amounts of data, but initial results suggested that it was not as adept as myself at extracting the necessary information from the multiple sources of information and that it was

²⁵ My first analyses included 243 Corporate Social Responsibility reports that I had collected as PDF files.

also unable to bring action research and practitioner experiences to bear when analysing the data. This may be contentious, but I felt that NVivo was too quantitative for the complex analysis that this study required. On that basis, I proceeded with my own 'manual' approach to interview data analysis. This included re-reading the transcript whilst reflecting on each interviewee's positioning within the Policy Implementation Continuum and their responses to the online survey. I also reflected on my pre-interview knowledge and experience of the actor, drawing on action research experiences and observations to make additional notes for subsequent triangulation to reinforce conclusions drawn from other sources. I then conducted keyword counts within each transcript. Keywords included the following:

• Governance	• Public	• Stakeholder
• Partnership	• Participation	• Funding
• Community	• Local	• Responsibility
• Responsibility	• Legitimacy	• Accountability

In addition to measuring keyword frequency against actor classification i.e. the number of times QUANGOs mentioned 'Local', I categorised the data as per the survey i.e. partnership-working, responsibility, legitimacy, accountability and the voluntary carbon offset sector, which then formed the basis for chapters 5 to 8. The data were then linked to background literature and secondary data, to link my empirical findings as researcher with MTPN sources as practitioner. During this initial analysis I also deleted irrelevant material (Cook and Craig, 1995). This presented challenges in understanding the nuances of the interviewee, and avoiding researcher bias and personal perspectives influencing my interpretation throughout the analysis (objectivity is discussed further in 3.8.3). I also found that the 7 day time-scale for analysis was important, as time went on (especially with other interviews occurring in between) the harder it became to appreciate the subtler and more complex discourse. The structure of early interviews was driven by survey findings, with the prompt review and

analysis of primary data enabling me to modify subsequent interview structures to account for the findings. This reflection also enabled me to conduct more efficient interviews, leading to the collection of a decreasing amount of irrelevant material. Further reflection was carried out by revisiting interviewees to give summaries of findings. This gave feedback to the interviewee, gave the opportunity for further comment (from both parties), provided further assurances regarding anonymity and objectivity, and confirmation that my own understanding of their arguments was correct.

3.8 Ethics, Reflexivity and Positionality

3.8.1 Adopting an Ethical Approach

Flowerdew and Martin (1997:75) argued that

‘Ethnographic research brings to the fore the many ethical, practical and personal issues which surround the organisation of primary data collection – issues to which again there are no clear cut answers’.

Ethical issues are present in any kind of research. The research process creates tension between the aims of research to make generalisations for the good of others, and the rights of participants to maintain privacy. Ethics pertain to doing good and avoiding harm. Harm can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles. Thus, the protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is imperative. The nature of ethical problems in qualitative research studies is subtle and different compared to problems in quantitative research. For example, potential ethical conflicts exist with regard to how a researcher gains access to a community group and in the effects the researcher may have on participants. Indeed, Flowerdew and Martin (1997:137) argued that:

'In terms of gaining access to and establishing a role in your research community, not only must the significance of your position and apparent intentions be considered but so too must your responsibilities over how the people researched will be represented in any account produced, how this will be circulated, and the impact that this might have on their lives in the future'.

Qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining, and describing people and their natural environments. Punch (1994) claimed that one hardly ever hears of ethical failures in qualitative research. However, Batchelor and Briggs (1994) claimed that the failure of researchers to address ethical issues has resulted in researchers being ill-prepared to cope with the unpredictable nature of qualitative research. Embedded in qualitative research are the concepts of relationships and power between researchers and participants, and the desire to participate in a research study depends upon a participant's willingness to share his or her experience. Qualitative studies are frequently conducted in settings involving the participation of people in their everyday environments, making researcher awareness of ethical issues an important point to address. This includes the appropriateness of the research design, methodology and reporting behaviours, as researchers are ultimately responsible for protecting participants. In qualitative studies, researchers usually collect data through interviews, observations, secondary sources, and audio-visual material. While in the field, researchers need to negotiate access to participants to collect these data, so the initial approach by the researcher may facilitate or inhibit access to information. Once access has been granted and data collection started, researchers may then experience ethical issues that may not have been anticipated in the research plan (Field and Morse, 1992). Ramos (1989) described three types of problems that may affect qualitative studies:

- the researcher / participant relationship
- the researcher's subjective interpretations of data

- the design itself

For example, deception or disclosure of damaging information can occur. When preparing research protocols, social science researchers should consider the potential ethical issues that can be anticipated in the study, such as informed consent, confidentiality, data generation and analysis, researcher / participant relationships, and reporting of final outcomes.

The purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participants' points of view through interviews and observations. The intention of the researcher is to listen to participants or observe them in their natural environments. The researcher's interpretation of these experiences is usually described as an emic perspective (Field and Morse, 1992). The acceptance of this statement means that researchers recognise that participants are autonomous people who will share information willingly, with a balanced research relationship encouraging disclosure, trust, and awareness of potential ethical issues. Kvale (1996) considered an interview to be a moral endeavour, claiming that the participant's response is affected by the interview, and that the knowledge gained through the interview affects our understanding of the human experience. This personal interaction between researchers and participants is crucial in data gathering by keeping in mind the research focus and being clear about the role of researchers. The researchers' perceptions of field situations are determined by personality and the nature of interactions (Punch, 1994). Although qualitative research methods make it difficult to predict how data will be collected during interviews or observation, researchers have the obligation to anticipate the possible outcomes of an interview and to weigh both benefits and potential harm. Ethical dilemmas that may arise from an interview are difficult to predict but the researcher needs to be aware of sensitive issues and potential conflicts of interest. An interview is usually equated with confidentiality, informed consent, and privacy, but also by recurrence of 'old wounds' and sharing of secrets (Kvale, 1996). The interview opens new risks to both researchers and participants. Ethical

codes and guidelines for research do not have answers to all ethical issues that may arise during research. The research protocol should also provide enough information ensuring protection of human subjects. Moreover, such protocols must give details of the manner in which the study will be conducted, details of access to participants, informed consent, and access and storage of data. The difficulties inherent in qualitative research can be alleviated by awareness and use of well-established ethical principles, specifically autonomy, beneficence, and justice.

Capron (1989) said that any kind of research should be guided by the principles of respect for people, beneficence, and justice. He considered that respect for people is the recognition of participants' rights, including the right to be informed about the study, the right to freely decide whether to participate in a study, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. It also means that participants exercise their rights as autonomous persons to accept voluntarily or refuse to participate in the study. Consent has been referred to as a negotiation of trust, and requires continuous renegotiation (Field and Morse, 1992; Kvale, 1996). A second ethical principle closely linked with research is beneficence - doing good for others and preventing harm. Beneficence in some situations may become paternalism. A paternalistic approach indicates the denial of autonomy and freedom of choice. Research strategies used to collect data and selection criteria also have ethical implications. If researchers are maintaining the principle of beneficence, overseeing the potential consequences of revealing participants' identities is a moral obligation, with the use of pseudonyms recommended. However, this strategy may not be sufficient if the study is conducted in a small community where participants could be easily recognised. In such cases, circulation of the study may need to be restricted.

Protection of participants' identities also applies to publications. Participants should be told how results will be published. Quotations or other data from the participants, even though

anonymous, could reveal their identity. Ideally, participants would approve the use of quotations used in publications. Confidentiality and anonymity can be breached by legal requirements such as when researchers' data are subpoenaed for legal purposes. Despite the need for confidentiality, qualitative research requires confirmability, that is, documentation of all activities included in a research study. This process may create an ethical dilemma regarding confidentiality and anonymity and, in some cases, participants may need to know that other researchers may review the process and the data. The principle of justice refers to equal share and fairness. One of the crucial and distinctive features of this principle is avoiding exploitation and abuse of participants. My understanding and application of this principle of justice was demonstrated by recognising vulnerability of the participants and their contributions to the study. For example, when, during data analysis, I considered a concept to be based on the contribution of a particular participant, then I requested permission to use it or at least discuss the issue(s) with the participant.

Conducting research in an area in which the researcher works or is already known raises several issues and ethical considerations. Having these ethical principles in mind, researchers who are also professionals in their area of study should reflect on their roles as researchers and compare the research with their previous / existing roles as professionals. At times, however, researchers have to revert rapidly to their roles as professionals, especially if engaged in action research. The researcher may also get better results by knowing the situation and having the trust of participants. Indeed, Flowerdew and Martin (1997:139) asked:

If you are expecting the people you live and / or work amongst to be frank about their opinions and experiences, should you do likewise in order to foster a genuine even-handed relationship? Or should you step back, at least for a while, observe, ask innocent questions, and be careful what you reveal about yourself?

However, the known researcher may get less information as respondents may feel coerced to participate and may limit the information they give. They may also feel self-conscious or threatened knowing that anything they say may be 'written down and used in evidence' (Flowerdew and Martin, 1997). Thus, negotiation and identification of my role as researcher in my professional setting was important, as was clarifying the purposes of the study. This meant that I was regarded as a researcher and not as someone who was doing something dubious.

This study presented a number of ethical challenges due to the researcher-practitioner approach. Working at Director level for Moor Trees gave me access to data that had been acquired for Moor Trees business i.e. address books, mailing lists and some actor personal contact details. This presented the dilemma of using these data as a researcher as opposed to as a practitioner. I concluded that two main issues needed to be addressed; (i) the use of contact data for research purposes; and (ii) anonymity. In addressing point (i) I initially consulted a small group of MTPN actors to ask how they would feel if they received an email from me requesting them to complete the online survey, possibly take part in a semi-structured interview and my playing an observer role in MTPN interactions for the duration of my data collection phase. Without exception, all confirmed that they were happy on all counts, though many stated that they would prefer anonymity for themselves and occasionally the organisations they represented. I drew two conclusions from this; (i) that this feedback was representative of the wider MTPN; and (ii) that assurances sought regarding the anonymity of findings was both an important technical aspect and one that indicated the potential sensitivity of the research.

Following on from this consultation, I sent a one-off email (see Appendix B) to each member of the MTPN requesting their participation in my research as discussed above. Included in this email were assurances regarding anonymity and the statement that participants could withdraw their contribution at any time before, during or after the interview and / or survey

processes. This was backed-up via further comment on the online survey, before and during the interview process, and prior to meetings, conferences or other occasions where I was observing a number of MTPN actors. All were happy with this approach and I have been careful to anonymise findings except where specific permissions have been given for company names to be quoted where the data presented could be considered to be contentious (see, for example, 7.2.3 regarding the Access to Nature fund).

Although 'ethics' play a major role in conducting high quality research, the position of the embedded researcher and the subsequent ability for him / her to reflect on their impact on the research subject necessitate arguably equal considerations.

3.8.2 Reflexivity and Positionality in the Partnership Network

Flowerdew and Martin (1997) argued that when a researcher is considering who they want to interview it is important to reflect on oneself and how one's identity will shape the interviewer / interviewee interaction. Such reflecting upon one's own position as the researcher has been conceptualised as positionality and reflexivity, i.e. the researcher needs to recognise his / her positionality and be reflexive (England, 1994; Rose, 1996). England (1994:82) described this reflexivity as

'self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as the researcher. Indeed, reflexivity is critical to the conduct of fieldwork, it induces self-discovery and can lead to insights and new hypotheses about the research questions.'

May (1997:286) argue that (as an analytical tool) '...reflexivity can mean recognising researcher's own social locations and disentangling how they might shape the empirical

analysis'. Valentine (1997:113) further argued that it is 'important to reflect on who you are and how your identity will shape the interactions that you have with others'. For conducting ethnographic-style fieldwork in geography, in particular, the researcher must also be aware of the power relationship with the interviewee. For example, gender, class, race, nationality, politics, history and experience can shape research and interpretations of the world. These influences cannot be removed, so the researcher must learn to accommodate and adapt accordingly (Schoenberger 1992). The sharing of professional backgrounds, however, had a positive effect of building a rapport between myself and the interviewees, leading to rich and detailed discussions based on empathy and respect around the points in question. Similarly, argued Flowerdew and Martin (1997), the researcher may find it easier to build a rapport with a research participant if the project is linked to their own interests or the researcher is interviewing people who they have something in common with.

This study focused on actors from the four stratified levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum, i.e. government, QUANGO, third sector and private sector, leading to a diverse range of actors with a common professional interest (the environmental sector). When collecting data from these individuals and organisations it was important to engage with my own positionality as professional, practitioner and researcher. Part of this engagement was my understanding of self as a multi-faceted individual and how this was to be presented to the subjects of my research activities, some of whom who already had different perceptions of my identity through university work-based initiatives on which I had already been working. For example, I had set up work-based learning, research and student volunteering programmes for Moor Trees. To focus both my personal and my research subjects' attention, I presented myself primarily as a 'University of Plymouth PhD Researcher', with a secondary professional affiliation to Moor Trees as 'charity Director'. Thus, as 'researcher' I was conducting semi-structured interviews, carrying out surveys and observing MTPN activities. As a 'charity Director' (or, 'practitioner'), I was conducting Moor Trees business. What quickly became clear,

however, was that action research for this study necessitated the combined role of 'researcher-practitioner'. What this meant, was that my positionality and role when interacting with MTPN actors could and often did vary, though it did not adversely affect data collection and always provided "an insider's account with an outsider's detachment" (Eyles and Smith, 1988:9).

This 'dual-personality' (as often suggested by a number of MTPN members) also presented the challenge of remaining objective and the need to continuously reflect on my potentially influential position as MTPN actor. However, it also enabled access to high quality, diverse and occasionally exclusive data from the MTPN which would have been very difficult to do otherwise. For example, sitting on various partnership committees, company boards and numerous stakeholder consultations presented numerous action research and participant observation opportunities yielding a rich data-set. My position as PhD researcher and Moor Trees Director thus created opportunities that would have otherwise been difficult to access with a different background. Throughout the data collection and analysis process it remained important for me continuously to assess my positionality. I did this through a number of ways. Firstly, MTPN actors were all informed and then regularly reminded of my dual role. This took place in interview, action research and observed settings. These are, for the most part, ethical issues, with Cook and Crang (1995) further emphasising that ethnographies do not necessarily produce concrete results (such as proven or discarded hypotheses) and that the researcher should avoid attempting to develop a definitive answer to a research question resulting from one's own and one or two respondents' theorisations, i.e. that:

The process of analysis is not a matter of developing a definitive account, but of trying to find a means to understand the interrelations of multiple versions of reality – including not least that of the academy – so that it serves to stress the inter-connectivities (Cook and Crang, 1995:91).

Secondly, I adopted a multi-method approach, where I collated and analysed data collected from an online survey, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, secondary sources and action research. This cross-referencing of data also removed the potential for researcher and respondent bias, plus assisted with my own objectivity.

3.8.3 Remaining Objective

Objectivity is considered to be one of the most significant elements of sociological enterprise, though also regarded by many as not easy or even possible to actually achieve (Sarantakos 1998). It is employed to reduce personal prejudice and bias, and to present social reality as it really is and not as constructed by the researcher (or respondents(s)). Thus, argued Sarantakos (1998:18), researchers should be neutral *technicians* and not 'reformers, neutral observers and not philosophers or analysts, and that researcher's personal views and value judgements should be kept out of research'. Some qualitative researchers, however, reject the notion of objectivity, arguing that inter-subjective reliability²⁶ is neither desirable nor possible. This argument is supported by the assumptions that objectivity is; (i) supported by results that can be standardised and is therefore not possible with qualitative research; and (ii) requires the researcher to remain distant and neutral to the research object, the respondents, the data collection and analysis methodology, and to the findings - none of which are possible with qualitative research. Furthermore, the qualitative social science researcher interacts with and interprets data from society, of which they are also part. In this sense, the researcher plays a personal role and objectivity in qualitative research is, therefore, impossible.

Research data should, however, be collected as objectively as possible. Both analytical and humanistic approaches adopt methodologies where the 'researcher is the expert, an objective recorder and observer of the world who neutrally carries out the study' (Kitchin and Tate

²⁶ So that if a research study is carried out by two or more researchers the same results are achieved (Sarantakos 1998)

2000:23). However, it can be argued that knowledge is fact-situated whereby it is not 'given', but in fact waiting to be 'discovered', i.e. it is constructed through how the researcher investigates and examines the world. Thus, it could be argued that it will be subject to researcher bias, or, by their enthusiasm and motivation, or the context of the research itself. Kitchin and Tate (2000) go on to argue that the researcher will also come to the research with a certain amount of 'baggage' that inhibits impartiality. Further, Sample (1996) argued that, whilst in theory a research design is chosen to address the situation and questions under investigation, in reality, it often suits the interest or speciality of the researcher. As such, research is researcher-orientated, based around the desires and agendas of the researcher rather than the subject of the research.

Data validity and reliability are important issues as, through them, the objectivity of the research is at stake (Sarantakos 1998, Silverman 1998). My status as researcher-practitioner presented the challenge of collecting and analysing data from my own work-place as objectively as possible. The answer was to adopt a 'systematic approach to data collection which allows you to maximise the chances of maintaining objectivity and achieving valid and reliable result' (Breakwell (1995:230). I found that the key point here was that I aimed to 'maximise the chances of maintaining objectivity' as my research work treated participants as people, not objects to be exploited or mined for information (England, 1994). Stanley and Wise (1993:157) supported this view:

'Whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings and moods. And all of those things influence how we feel and understand what is going on. Our consciousness is always the medium through which the research occurs; there is no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher.'

What I ultimately discovered during this study was that despite my best efforts at avoiding personal preconceptions, I often entered into data collection and analysis activities mentally predicting outcomes and outputs. This raised initial personal concerns regarding my own objectivity as researcher / practitioner. However, these concerns were addressed when I found on a number of occasions that findings from this study had fundamentally changed some of my own beliefs and ideas regarding partnership-working in the environmental sector.

3.9 Conclusion

The multi-actor nature of networks and partnerships and the importance of the associated relationships made this research inherently challenging. Indeed, whilst the MTPN provided a finite sample of actors and the Policy Implementation Continuum a distinct stratification of actor types, deconstructing their complex and often informal operational and financial interactions would have been difficult if I had not had the in-depth understanding of an environmental sector practitioner. Lowndes *et al.* (2007) concurred that the informality of much of the activity meant that telephone conversations and chance meetings (as part of my action research approach) were as significant as pre-arranged interviews and discussions. Although my practitioner experience benefited this study, my primary role was of researcher. This led to a requirement to establish research rigour through this chapter's extensive provision of information on the appropriateness of the use of multiple methods and information on respondent selection (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). I have further highlighted; my immersion in the research topic, lengthy and in-depth fieldwork, revisits to and verification by respondents, and the ongoing triangulation of results.

Regarding my role as researcher-practitioner, this presented methodological challenges as a result of my 'dual-personality', from actor sensitivities regarding the potential commercialisation and / or the dissemination of results, and my own objective analysis and

interpretation of data. However, the dove-tailing of my practitioner background with action research, observation and interviews yielded a rich set of data which, when triangulated, proved to be reliable as well as leading to robust conclusions. Perhaps in further recognition of my approach, was the high survey response rate. This electronic format also proved to be a highly cost-effective and flexible (format-wise) method that enabled my access to the MTPN population (Granello and Wheaton, 2004). Findings from the survey then enabled me to develop the structure for the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the means of data collection because of two primary considerations. Firstly, they are well suited for the exploration of respondent perceptions, attitudes and beliefs regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues of environmental partnerships through probing for more information and clarification of answers. Secondly, the typology of themes identified during the questionnaire survey process necessitated the adoption of an exploratory framework, thus potentially identifying new discussion points and, therefore, precluding the use of a standardised interview schedule (Barriball and While, 1994). Semi-structured interviews were, therefore, used to enable a focused but conversational approach to data collection by identifying and then exploring topics relating to the research.

I underpinned the survey and interviews with an action research model carried out within the MTPN as Director of Moor Trees. The next chapter analyses Moor Trees and its network of partners, discussing the charity's role in EPPP, and how network members from across all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum interact, thus providing a strong empirical focus for partnership-working in the environmental sector.

Part IV Data Collection, Analysis and Discussion

Part II of this thesis reviewed environmental partnership and governance literature. Much is written on governance, with the likes of Imrie and Raco (1999), Jessop (1998), Mackinnon (2002) and Stoker (1997) variously defining it as the redistribution of power to non-state actors, the transition from hierarchical to network government, and the 'blurring' of public / private sector boundaries to enable 'coordination and collaboration'. This list is by no means exhaustive but there is a common thread of state / non-state interaction, or 'partnership-working'. Part II narrowed the research focus by reviewing the partnership approach in the environmental context. It highlighted various authors' arguments regarding partnerships as the delivery framework for the 'bottom-up' approach of environmental governance i.e. whereby partnerships are formed, often between state and non-state actors, to engage in both formulation and delivery of EPPP (Connelly et al., 2006; Imrie and Raco, 1996; Mackinnon, 2002; Sampford, 2002). It is this increasingly complex multi-actor partnership-working, it is proposed, that raises questions regarding the acceptance of responsibility (through state devolution of power), acquisition of legitimacy (the issue of non-elected actors), and the provision of accountability (regarding actor autonomy) of these partnerships.

Thus, I argue that, whilst partnerships are increasingly regarded as a delivery mechanism within the conceptual framework of environmental governance, successful application is dependent on meeting conditions of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability, with effective partnership-working only becoming a reality when all three are engaged i.e.

- ACCEPTING Responsibility
- ACQUIRING Legitimacy
- PROVIDING Accountability

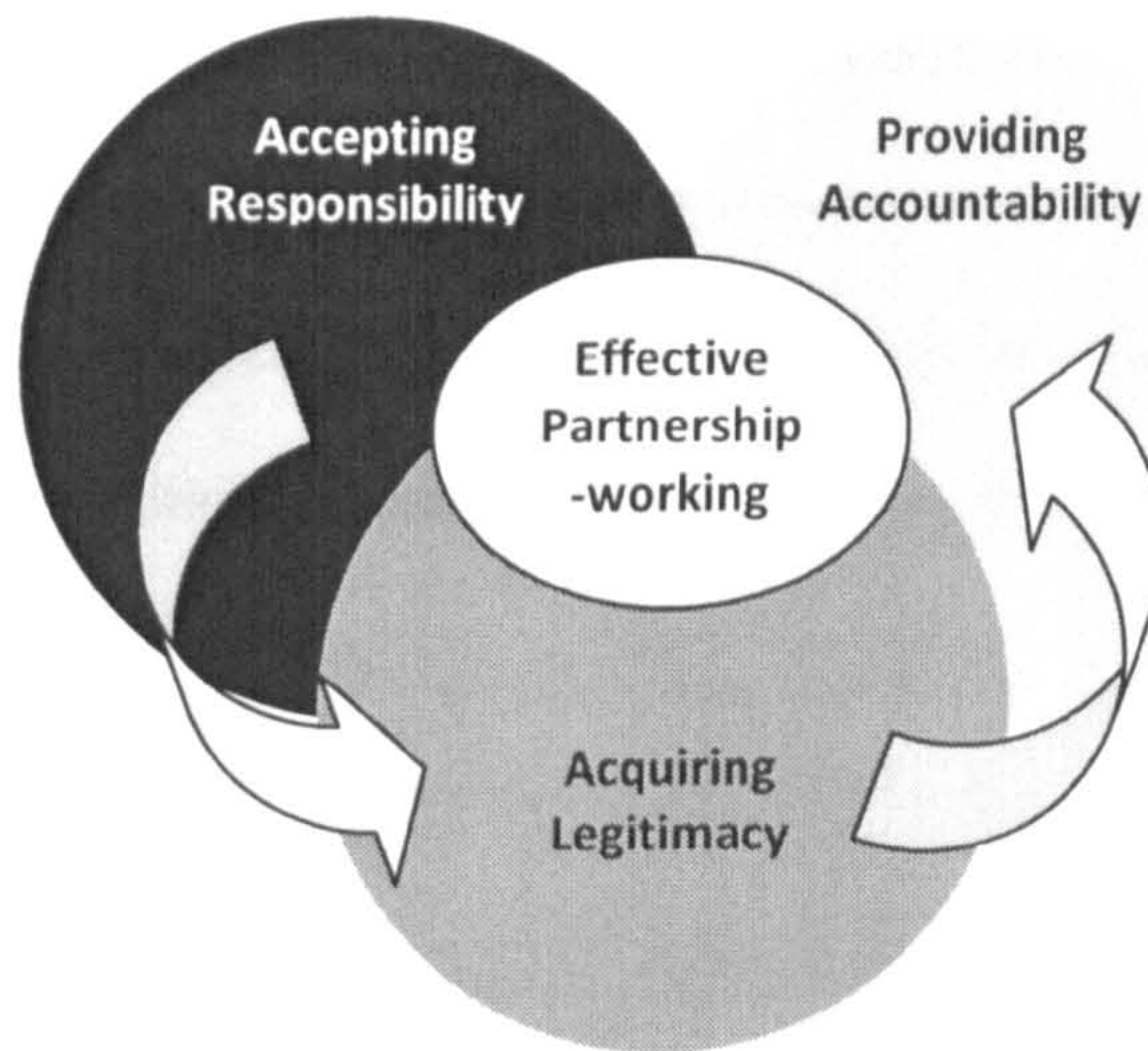


Figure 4.1: The Components of Effective Partnership–working

Source: Author

Through the lens of the MTPN, this study addressed the practicalities of implementing partnership theory, or, the shift from concept to application. In this section of the thesis, data were collected from the MTPN using the methodology outlined in Part III i.e. secondary sources, action research, participant observation, 154 online survey responses (collected from a sampling frame of 200 taken from a population of 400) and 20 semi-structured interviews. Situated within the analytical framework of the MTPN case study, Part IV is split into five chapters:

- **Chapter 4**, where the case study of the MTPN is presented as the empirical focus of this thesis.
- **Chapter 5**, where it is suggested that the state is devolving responsibility, with questions raised over the subsequent resourcing of grassroots actors.
- **Chapter 6** analyses the legitimacy of partnerships as delivery framework for state EPPP
- **Chapter 7**, where the financial and operational accountability of partnerships are discussed against the backdrop of non-state actors and associated autonomy.

- **Chapter 8** draws on the findings of chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 to assess the opportunities and threats of the partnership approach, drawing on lessons learnt from observing and working within the case study, and suggesting new approaches to ensure that responsibility, legitimacy and accountability can be achieved to enable successful partnership-working.

Chapter 4: CASE STUDY: Moor Trees and its Partnership Network

4.1 Introduction

This thesis considered the partnership approach in environmental governance and the issues of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability. Its empirical focus is the case study of Moor Trees and its partnership network, collectively termed as the MTPN. This case study was chosen due to researcher embeddedness, the diversity of MTPN actors²⁷, and its representation of the complexities of effective partnership-working.

This study brought additional focus to the Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCM) and the relationships between Moor Trees (as offset provider) and organisations from across the Policy Implementation Continuum with whom it works that seek to offset their carbon emissions through tree-planting as a form of carbon sequestration. I was embedded within the environmental sector as the Director of Moor Trees. This privileged position, as well as providing co-funding for this study, provided action research and participant observation opportunities to provide in-depth assessment of the associated actors and networks (see Hoggart *et al.*, 2002; Sarantakos, 1998; Silverman, 1985). The nature of this research (the study of inter- and intra-actor relationships and network dynamics) meant that a diverse range of quantitative and qualitative data were made available to me, thus providing a strong empirical focus. Access to this group of actors presented the opportunity to ask if the partnerships were:

- Increasingly **responsible** for government plans, policies and programmes (PPP) delivery through the third sector agenda
- **Legitimately** delivering top-down PPP due to their non-democratic nature
- **Financially and operationally accountable**

²⁷ Spanning the four sectors of public, QUANGO, third and private sectors.

Through an action research approach to the VCM, it also presented the opportunity to ask:

- Can the largely autonomous nature of the VCM provide a credible contribution towards the delivery of EPPP, thus providing a robust example of environmental partnership-working?

Chapter 3 detailed the methodological approach for qualitative and quantitative data collection. The use of multiple methods maximised the opportunities presented by researcher embeddedness for the collection of in-depth and complex datasets (Hoggart *et al.*, 2002; Robson 2002; Wadsworth, 1998). This embeddedness further provided often exclusive access to partnership networks. My status as Director of Moor Trees also brought partnership-practitioner experience, presenting an in-depth knowledge of partnership theory and application 'in the real world'. It presented a candid view of a cross-sector, multi-actor network constantly working to turn policy into practice. As discussed in the previous chapter (Section 3.8), this ethnographic-based approach raised the challenges of researcher subjectivity and respondent bias (de Vaus, 1996; Remenyi, 2000). When considering the suitability of the target research sample, care was also taken to include a sufficient diversity of environmental actors. This meant representation from all four layers of the Policy Implementation Continuum (see Figure 3.1), each of which the MTPN is able to populate to provide reliable and valid data.

Out of the conceptual framework of governance, it is the 'operationalisation' of partnership theory that this study focused upon (Boonstra, 2006; Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Imrie and Raco, 1999; Stoker, 1998). This chapter provides context and background to the actors, partnership networks and markets that are the empirical focus of this thesis. Set primarily against the geographical backdrop of the South West of England, it centres on a small woodland charity (Moor Trees) and its partnership network. I was embedded as both researcher and practitioner

as Director of Moor Trees and, therefore, within the MTPN. This network was chosen as the over-arching case study for this thesis for the following reasons:

- My embeddedness provided:
 - Action research and participant observation opportunities
 - Partnership-practitioner experience and expertise
- The population consisted of a range of cross-sector actors (see Table 4.1)
- ‘Real-life’ example of partnership responsibility, legitimacy and accountability issues

This chapter firstly discusses Moor Trees’ background, aims and objectives, and provides detail on how its charitable activities work alongside two QUANGOs. It then analyses the MTPN, discussing how Moor Trees has embraced partnership-working and the ensuing benefits and challenges this has posed, including the case study of the Offender Pathway to Employment Programme at Her Majesty’s Prison (HMP) Dartmoor. The chapter then introduces the VCM and how Moor Trees has diversified its activities into this market through its voluntary carbon offset programme. It then concludes with an assessment of the quantity and quality of data available and the pathway to collection and analysis.

4.2 Moor Trees Overview

Established in 1999, Moor Trees was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee (No. 03716434) on 19th February 1999 and achieved charitable status (No. 1081142) 19th June 2000. Based at South Brent (Devon, UK), it operates in and around Dartmoor National Park, the City of Plymouth and the South Hams areas. These areas sit within the South West of England (the geographical focus of this study) with a wider partnership network that, in part, extends nationally (see Section 4.6).

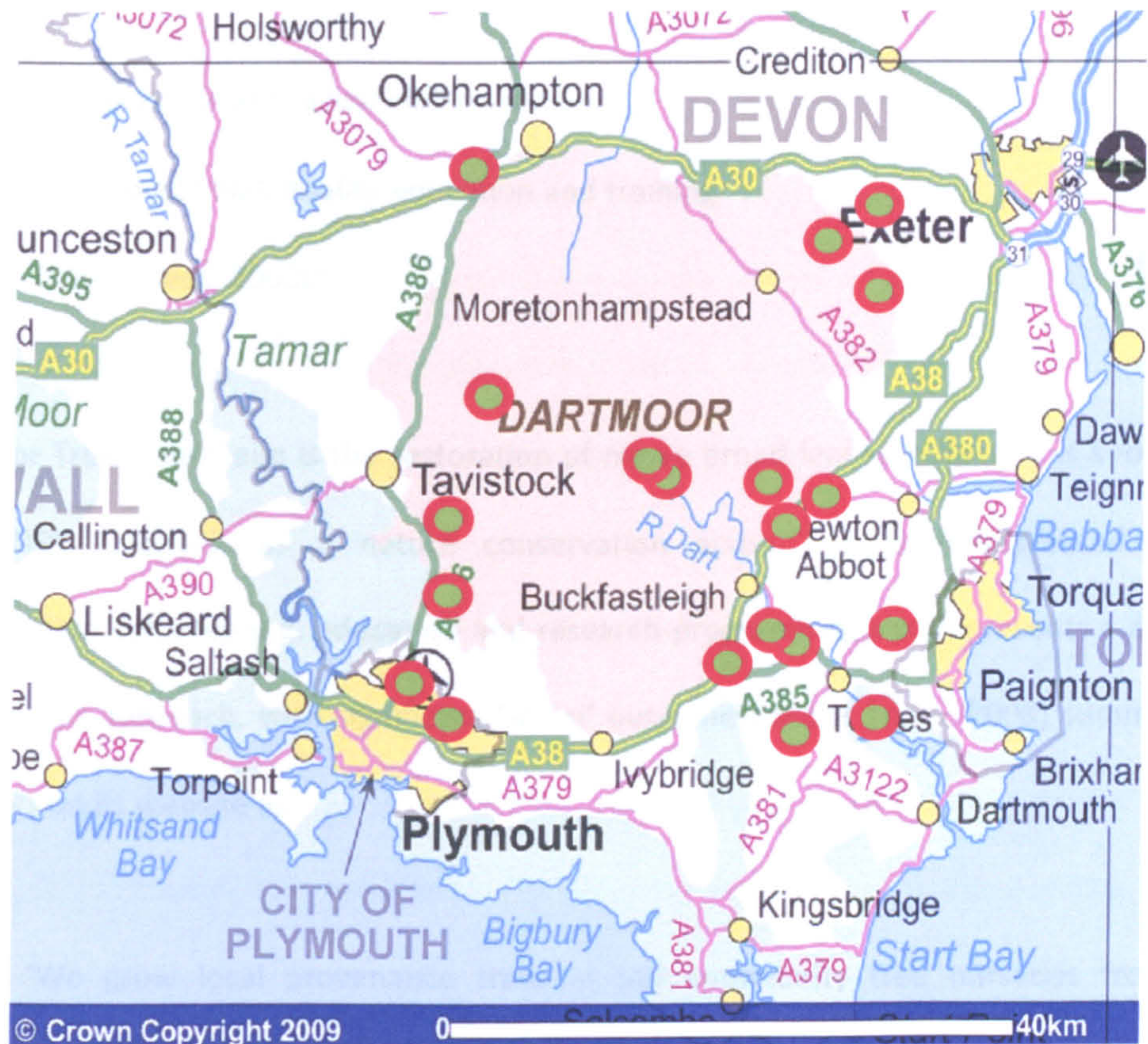


Figure 4.3: Moor Trees locations

(Images reproduced with permission of Ordnance Survey and Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland)

Moor Trees' stated aims are as follows:

- The preservation and conservation for the public benefit of the environment, and in particular Dartmoor's wild natural forests;
- The advancement of education amongst the public concerning natural history, conservation and the environment, and in particular the role of the woodland restoration in the stabilisation and regeneration of ecosystems.

(Charity Commission, 2008)

The 'About Us' section of the Moor Trees website publishes its aims as to:

- create new and enable natural regeneration of native woodland
- build social cohesion through volunteering

- work towards a low carbon economy
- provide high quality education and training

(Moor Trees, 2008a)

As Moor Trees' main aim is the restoration of native broad-leaf woodland, it is known within the MTPN primarily as a nature conservation actor. Its community-based activities, conservation volunteering, education and research programmes also represents a diversified, cross-sector approach, with significant 'social' outcomes. Moor Trees (2008) summarised its activities on its website as:

'We grow local provenance trees in our community tree nurseries from locally collected seed. Volunteering is central to our work, so each year we work with hundreds of volunteers of all ages and abilities. We also run research, education and training programmes with partner schools, colleges and universities'.

Moor Trees restores native broad-leaf woodland by working in partnership with a wide range of local communities and businesses to collect seed to grow local provenance seed across a network of seven community tree nurseries prior to planting in various woodland locations. In addition to this environmental aim, social benefits are also very important to Moor Trees, with individuals of all ages and abilities welcomed to their nurseries and planting sites. Activities include seed gathering, sorting, sowing and nurturing, sapling care, site development and improving access for less mobile volunteers. The charity also works in partnership with further education colleges (including Duchy College and Bickton College) to offer a wide range of practical skills, education and training for individuals and businesses (Moor Trees, 2008). The Moor Trees Woodlands Service provides free consultation, planting and maintenance to help create and restore native woodlands of all sizes for conservation benefit. The Moor Trees Woodlands Manager pointed out that although fragmented remnants of ancient semi-natural

woodlands (ASNW) only cover 2.8% of Dartmoor and 1.8% of the South West, they provide some of the most important habitats in the region with upland oakwoods being one of the closest habitats to the natural climax vegetation of the uplands. The Woodlands Service works with landowners to plant new and extend existing woodlands for conservation by improving the economic viability of schemes with free trees from their tree nurseries, a volunteer workforce and grant application advice. The service includes project design, grant payment applications, woodland management plans, free trees, recycled tree stakes, tubes and spirals, and volunteer tree planters. This afforestation of agricultural land is becoming an established part of rural policy²⁸, recognising that, if correctly managed, forestry has a positive impact on the natural landscape and biodiversity. It further recognises the role played in mitigating climate change, for which deforestation is one the largest contributing anthropogenic factors.

The next two sections provide detail on two funding programmes; agri-environment schemes (AES) and the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS). These schemes provide examples of state-funding programmes that work with non-state partners for delivery, whilst enforcing hierarchical accountability through various checks, balances and control mechanisms (Section 7.3 provides more detailed analyses of these managerial technologies).

4.3 Agri-Environment Schemes

The state provides funding for this work through AES run by Natural England, a QUANGO. The AES support, amongst other things, forest improvement, with the principal aims to maintain the ecological stability of forests and to restore damaged ones. The agri-environmental strategy of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is largely aimed at enhancing the sustainability of agro-ecosystems. The measures set out to address the integration of environmental concerns into the CAP encompass environmental requirements (cross-

²⁸ Agenda 2000 reinforced financial incentives to farmers converting agricultural land to woodland and forest (European Commission, date unknown).

compliance) and incentives (e.g. set-aside) integrated into the market and income policy, as well as targeted environmental measures that form part of the Rural Development Programmes e.g. AES (European Commission, 2008 (no page)). AES are increasingly delivered by working through partners such as Moor Trees. Building on the Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Stewardship schemes, it has three elements:

1. **Entry Level Stewardship (ELS).** A straightforward approach to supporting the good stewardship of the countryside. This is done through simple and effective land management that goes beyond the Single Payment Scheme requirement to maintain land in good agricultural and environmental condition. It is open to all farmers and landowners.
2. **Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS).** The organic strand of ELS. It is geared to organic and organic / conventional mixed farming systems and is open to all farmers not receiving Organic Farming Scheme aid.
3. **Higher Level Stewardship (HLS).** This involves more complex management, where land managers need advice and support. Agreements are tailored to local circumstances. HLS applications will be assessed against specific local targets and agreements will be offered where they meet these targets and represent good value for money.

(Natural England, 2008)

The next section discusses the EWGS, which provides a further example of state funding for non-state programmes, and demonstrates how third sector actors such as Moor Trees are improving delivery performance.

4.4 The English Wood Grant Scheme

Although the AES predominantly supports landowners in the agricultural context, the EWGS funds both agricultural and non-agricultural landowners with regard to woodland establishment and conservation. Farmers and / or landowners commit themselves to at least a five-year period during which time they adopt environmentally-friendly land farming techniques that go beyond usual good farming practice. In return, they receive payment(s) that compensate for additional costs and loss of income resulting from altered farming practices. For example:

- Adherence to maximum stocking rates for cattle or sheep
- Compliance with specific conditions for the cultivation of sloping land
- Respect of maximum permitted volumes of fertilisers per hectare
- Compliance with specific rules concerning the use of plant protection products

The EWGS is administered by the Forestry Commission. It is designed to develop the co-ordinated delivery of public benefits from England's woodlands. It is run nationally, with the main purpose being the increased public benefit from England's woodlands. It is supported via the Rural Development Programme for England (Defra, 2007; Forestry Commission, 2008). Woodlands have many different values both to their owners and to society. These include; the capacity to provide a habitat for wildlife; to protect water and soils; to produce high-quality timber; to enhance the landscape and living and working environments; to act as a financial investment, or to embody or protect a heritage aspect. The values that are most desired by today's society include; the creation and maintenance of habitats for wildlife, producing healthy and pleasing living and working environments for people, protecting biodiversity and aspects of our cultural heritage, and providing safe areas for recreation and sport' (Forestry

Commission, 2009). Grants are awarded against regional targets, though the over-arching objectives are to:

- Sustain and increase the public benefits derived from existing woodlands in England
- Invest in the creation of new woodlands in England of a size, type and location that most effectively deliver public benefits.

The component grant types of EWGS have their own objectives. Some grants are focused regionally to meet the priorities of Regional Forestry Framework action plans, and the objectives are specified more closely to suit. EWGS grant applications are considered if they deliver key targets, such as:

- area of woodland under certified sustainable forest management and approved
- management schemes and bringing woodland SSSIs into favourable condition
- expanding the area of woodland with public access
- assisting delivery of Priority Habitat and Species Action Plans for woodlands
- improving the environment of disadvantaged urban communities
- woodland creation

(Forestry Commission, 2009)

The AES and EWGS provided an empirical focus on state funding programmes partnering with 'bottom-up' community actors such as Moor Trees to facilitate EPPP delivery. It is not only state actors that partner with Moor Trees in the delivery of these programmes. Moor Trees has its own network of partners that contribute to this afforestation programme. This 'community governance' includes a wide range of actors from across the environmental sector, many of whom have either traditionally been marginalised or have previously not been

directly engaged in environmental programmes (Day, 1998; Goodwin, 1998; Hutchinson, 1994; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Stoker, 1998).

4.5 Moor Trees' Partnership Approach

Moor Trees' schemes include environmental agreements with all the landowners with whom they work to ensure that the woodlands they create and restore are protected from future unwanted developments. This means that, each year, thousands of trees get planted that would otherwise not have done so through a *partnership approach* between Moor Trees, landowners and statutory agencies²⁹. This approach is the main thread of this study. Moor Trees, therefore, presents an interesting empirical focus due to the availability and richness of data, and the diversity of actors engaged in the partnership. The Moor Trees website mentions partnership-working:

'Our partnership approach has increased resources and impact in the region, with more woodlands, nurseries and a growing number of volunteers. Our more recent programmes in education, training, research and corporate responsibility are now also firmly established as an integral part of the charity' (Moor Trees, 2008).

Partnership-working is embedded from European Union policy level, where there has been a fundamental shift from support for sectoral policies (e.g. agriculture³⁰) to supporting more spatial (rural) policies. Wilson (2001) conceptualised this as a shift from 'productivism'³¹ to 'post-productivism'³². The latter emphasises the development of rural areas' capacity to

²⁹ Including; Dartmoor National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Natural England and Rural Payments Service.

³⁰ See Wilson and Hart 2001, and Wilson 2003 and 2004 regarding the transition from intensive to 'post-productivist' sustainable agriculture.

³¹ Productivist policies' are characterised by the discursive emphasis on food production, commodity production maximization and rhetoric focusing on national / regional self-sufficiency (Wilson, 2002:688).

³² Post-productivist policies, meanwhile, are generally seen to be associated with a shift in discourse towards 'environment', 'extensification' and 'multi-functionality' of the countryside, and towards the more holistic concept of *rural development policy* complementing *agricultural policy*.

support themselves through capacity building, community-based initiatives and partnerships (Buller, 2000; Ray, 2000; Shortall, 1994). Part of this transition was via the Common Agricultural Policy reform of 2003, which put greater emphasis on cross-compliance³³ and has since become compulsory. The reform involves decoupling most direct aid payments from production to reduce many of the incentives for intensive production that carry increased environmental risks. This has seen an increasing amount of improved grassland turned over to the type of woodland planting carried out by Moor Trees due to a shift away from intensive agriculture and towards environmental sustainability³⁴ (European Commission 2008b). To bring into context, it is worth considering Wilson's (2004:462) framing of this paradigm shift as the new 'post-productivist rural governance'. Wilson discussed this in the agricultural context, but parallels exist with the environmental sector, in particular ideas regarding the inclusion of formerly politically marginal actors (such as environmental groups or local grassroots organisations e.g. Moor Trees and partners) in PPP formulation and delivery. He goes on to discuss 'the changing levels and trajectories of a more inclusive model of governance with empowerment of local stakeholders and grassroots actors, and, ultimately, the erosion of the power of the state as the sole deviser and shaper of policies and decisions affecting rural communities' (see also discussions on 'rural partnerships' by Boonstra (2006), Jessop (1998), Mackinnon (2000), Raco (2006) and Winter (1996), and the 'hollowing out of the state' by Jepson (2005), Jessop (1998) and Yarwood (2002).

Demand for Moor Trees' work is increasing. A significant part of this demand is due to the provision of free trees, volunteer labour and consultancy expertise, with this charitable work helped to improve the economic viability of woodland schemes that are only part-funded by the AES and EWGS (Natural England 2008). More recently, however, it is the synergies brought

³³ The principle that farmers should observe a minimum level of environmental standards as a condition for the full granting of the direct payments (European Commission, 2008a)

³⁴ Agenda 2000 reinforced financial incentives to farmers converting agricultural land to woodland and forest (European Commission, 2008b).

by Moor Trees' 'bottom-up' approach of community involvement leading to working with thousands of volunteers each year (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Sampford, 2002; Sorensen, 2005).

4.6 The Moor Trees Partnership Network

Partnerships have long been argued to be part of the new delivery framework for environmental sustainability. Their benefits including the gaining of local ownership and knowledge, and the increased capacity provided via the community-based platforms like those provided by Moor Trees (Kearns, 1992; Murdoch, 1997; Stoker, 1998). This bottom-up approach was underlined in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit's Agenda 21 document (furthered in 2002 by the WSSD Type 2 outcomes³⁵) which promoted collaborative advantage when seeking to solve environmental issues and asserted that partnerships require new levels of co-operation between key sectors of society and government (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Sorensen, 2005). At the local level, LA21 furthered this partnership approach by including previously marginalised actors and the creation of cross-sector collaborations between public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders (Day, 1998; United Nations, 1993; Worthington *et al.*, 2003). Partnership-working in the environmental sector is now considered to be a new norm, with newly empowered community stakeholders and an attitudinal shift towards greater environmental stewardship (Hutchinson, 1994; Jessop, 1998; Mackinnon, 2000; Winter, 1996).

Moor Trees has embraced and developed this partnership approach across the region, leading to it establishing itself within a largely autonomous partnership network of actors, many of whom would otherwise not work in such cross-sector collaborations. One of the main outcomes for Moor Trees has been the expansion (and diversification) of activities outside of its historic operational boundary of Dartmoor National Park into the South Hams Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the cities of Plymouth and Exeter (see Hutchinson,

³⁵ Including voluntary partnership initiatives of, or with, the private sector.

1994) regarding the crossing of political divides and geographic boundaries). Though the geographical spread of operations is limited to mid- and south Devon, Moor Trees works with partners from across the region and, occasionally, nationally. This partnership approach has increased resources and the charity's impact, with more woodlands, nurseries and volunteers, and new programmes in education, training, research, corporate responsibility and voluntary carbon offsetting being established. For example, partnerships with BITC, BTCV, Groundwork and the universities of Plymouth and Exeter provided support for their national award-winning volunteer project, with volunteers receiving two further awards from the Volunteer in Plymouth scheme. Moor Trees has increasingly adopted partnership-working into its programmes and now considers partnership-working to be an essential component in both the development and delivery of its projects. Indeed, the charity now acts as a key partner in multi-actor projects including representatives from all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum (see Section 3.1). Moor Trees is also increasingly recognised in public sector PPP documents and reports as a key partner for the delivery of specified objectives - the woodland objectives of the Dartmoor National Park Authority's Woodland Strategy (2005-2010) being one example (see also Section 3.5 regarding Secondary Sources). This growing association and 'formal' partnering highlights the key issues identified in this research, namely:

- **Responsibility** - have government actors shifted their own responsibility for the delivery of certain EPPP Moor trees i.e. Local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives?
- **Legitimacy** - as a non-elected actor, can Moor Trees legitimately deliver state PPP?
- **Accountability** - as an autonomous actor, is Moor Trees accountable for delivery?

Using the MTPN as a case study, therefore, provided a first-hand example of multi-actor, cross-sector engagement in the delivery of EPPP and an empirical focus for this study's research objectives. Table 4.1 details Moor Trees' core network³⁶ partners. It stratifies them into the

³⁶ The *core* network includes the actors with whom Moor Trees actively works in partnership.

four levels of public, QUANGO, third and private sectors (see Figure 3.1 Policy Implementation Continuum). This shows the state to non-state paradigm shift of EPPP formulation and delivery represented in the continuum (see Jessop, 1998; Mackinnon, 2000; Sampford, 2002; Savan *et al.*, 2004; and Winter, 1996 regarding empowered rural communities). Table 4.1 also suggests the transferring of power and responsibility (downwards) from state to non-state actors through community involvement and partnership-working, key components of environmental governance (Raco 2006, Thompson 2005).


Sector	Partner Sector		
Public	Exeter City Council Defra Devon County Council Government Office of the South West	Plymouth City Council South Hams District Council Teignbridge District Council West Devon Borough Council	Government ('state')  Community ('Non-state')
QUANGO	BBC Big Lottery Fund Business in the Community Dartmoor National Park Duchy College Exeter University	Forestry Commission HMP Dartmoor Natural History Museum Natural England South Devon College University of Plymouth ³⁷	
third	BTCV CLINKS Dartington Estate Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Dartmoor Partnership Exeter CVS JP Getty Jr. Charitable Trust LankellyChase Foundation Plymouth Guild	RSA Trees Sharpham Trust South Hams CVS Teignbridge CVS The Bromley Trust Tree Council We are V West Devon CVS Will Charitable Trust	
private	Andrew McCarthy Associates Bond Pearce Carbon Projects Co-op Bank Cornwall College EDF Energy Fourfront Group Francis Porter Design	Google AdWords O'Connors Campers Pell Frischmann Consultants South Hams Motor Club Spook Media The Almanac Gallery Toshiba Xperta	

Table 4.1: Moor Trees Partners

Source: Author (collated from action research within Moor Trees)

³⁷ A university is slightly ambiguous regarding sector position, due to mix of public and private funding.

This adaptation of the Policy Implementation Continuum is shown in the context of Moor Trees' work in the environmental sector, with actors from all four levels and a diverse range of state and non-state actors. It is this *core* network that provides the empirical focus for this research, with the *wider*³⁸ network population consisting of 400 actors, 200 of whom formed the target sample for the online survey (154 responses, representing 77%, were received).

The next section highlights the Offender Pathway to Employment Programme (OPEP) as an example of a MTPN partnership project that included actors from all four levels of the Continuum. I worked within OPEP as a practitioner whilst at the same time observing it as a researcher to provide an outsider's view with an insider perspective (Eyles and Smith, 1988).

4.7 Deconstructing the Offender Pathway to Employment Programme Partnership

OPEP is a multi-actor partnership based at HMP Dartmoor (Princetown, Devon). Its members represent each level of the Policy Implementation Continuum.

	Partner	Sector	Role
Primary	Moor Trees	Third	Partnership Principal ³⁹
	HMP Dartmoor	Public	Host
	Bicton College	Third	Education and training
Secondary	Bromley Trust	Third	Funder
	Dartmoor National Park Authority	QUANGO	Funder
	Forestry Commission	QUANGO	Offender work experience
	Land-based employers (various)	Private	Offender work experience
	Tudor LankellyChase	Third	Funder
	University of Plymouth	Third	Research

Table 4.2: OPEP Partners

Source: Author (collated from action research within Moor Trees)

³⁸ The *wider* network includes the actors with whom Moor Trees regularly collaborates.

³⁹ See Section 7.2.2 for discussion on Partnership Principals

OPEP aims to reduce re-offending by improving offender employability through the provision of an enhanced land-based education and training programme based around practical conservation opportunities. It also helps deliver HMP Dartmoor's sustainability agenda through farm conservation work and local community involvement. The project was established to address the links between re-offending and unemployment i.e. offenders released from prison without a job are twice as likely to re-offend as those released with employment already lined up. It acknowledged that unemployment is the most significant barrier to successful re-integration into society by making it harder to maintain stable accommodation or earn money legitimately. OPEP aims to help overcome this through its accredited land-based training programme. The courses are accredited through the National Proficiency Tests Council and Lantra and are designed to give successful candidates competence in a range of short course i.e. fork lift, chainsaw, and tractor driving.

The partnership between Moor Trees and HMP Dartmoor started with the establishment of a new tree nursery on the farm. This was the first step in a wider practical conservation and land-based activity programme across the prison as a whole, starting with the planting of over 1,000 trees. The prison farm staff are all National Proficiency Training Council / Lantra trainers and assessors for various technical certificates and provide good training opportunities to the inmates. Moor Trees and HMP Dartmoor then invited Bicton College to join the project as third primary partner. The reason for this invitation was two-fold; firstly, Bicton was able to provide accredited training, secondly, it was able to access state funding via the Learning and Skills Council to pay for the accreditations. The resulting partnership between Moor Trees, HMP Dartmoor and Bicton College presented a cross-sector, multi-actor case study of non-state actors delivering state PPP. I acknowledge that 'the reduction of reoffending' does not necessarily sit within the remit of 'the environmental sector', so will further clarify the relevance of the OPEP case study to this research.

As further discussed in Section 5.3, it is widely acknowledged that the environmental sector suffers from a resource deficit. This has led to many sector actors diversifying their activities to access new funding streams and establish 'trading' activities. In this case, Moor Trees has diversified into working with offenders and the provision of accredited training. The former is clearly a niche activity, thus making new associated funding streams available. The latter is a new income stream, with Bicton College having entered into a commercial arrangement with Moor Trees to pay a profit-share on completed short courses. OPEP not only provides an empirical focus on multi-actor, cross-sector partnership-working, it also provides an example of how the state has devolved responsibility for the training of offenders to non-state actors, with legitimisation secured via HMP Dartmoor's (as a state actor) inclusion in the partnership (Chapter 6 explores legitimacy in further detail).

The next section discusses the Moor Trees Voluntary Carbon Offset (VCO) Programme. The programme was used as an empirical focus for this study as an example of a market-based approach, and as the 'zero accountability' case study in Section 7.6.

4.8 The Moor Trees Voluntary Carbon Offset programme

The Moor Trees VCO Programme (hereonin referred to as 'the programme') was created in 2006 in response to increasing demand from local businesses and individuals for tree planting to offset their impact on the environment. The programme and associated voluntary carbon markets provided further empirical focus for this study as they demonstrated how 'the state uses various techniques of partnership, consultation and devolved responsibility in order to directly implicate non-state actors in the act of governing' (Thompson, 2005:326). This section is split into two sub-sections, the first (4.5.1) provides background information on VCM, and the second (4.5.2) provides information on the programme.

4.8.1 Voluntary Carbon Markets

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2007) defined carbon offsetting as 'calculating a person or entity's greenhouse gas emissions and then purchasing 'credits' from emission reduction projects that have prevented or removed the emission of an equivalent amount of greenhouse gas elsewhere'. 'Offsets' emerged in the Kyoto Protocol, which allows industrialised (Annex I⁴⁰) countries to meet a proportion of their greenhouse gas emission reduction targets by purchasing emission reductions from projects in the developing world. This is known as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), with projects between Annex I economies falling under the Joint Implementation (Bailey and Maresh, 2009; Bailey and Wilson, 2009; Bishop *et al.*, 2008; Bumpus and Liverman, 2008; Hamilton *et al.*, 2008; Goff, 2007; SWEI, 2008). This created a parallel market in voluntary carbon offsets for entities that have no statutory obligation but want to buy offsets for altruistic or public relations activities. As a result of this and a parallel growth in volumes traded in the Kyoto-based compliance carbon markets, a wide range of corporate and private non-compliance or voluntary offset buyers have developed the Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCMs) into a legitimate commodity. The growth in VCMs is primarily based on the use of project-based emission reductions by proactive corporations in achieving self-imposed carbon neutrality commitments or in offering low-carbon products and services. The offset programs underpinning these carbon neutrality commitments are managed by businesses or NGOs, making the VCM very different from the Kyoto markets. Moor Trees provides an example of VCM programme provider.

4.8.2 Programme Methodology

The aim of the programme was to provide organisations and individuals with a tree planting service as a form of carbon sequestration to offset their carbon emissions. This type of

⁴⁰ All the countries that were OECD members in 1992, countries with Economies in Transition and Turkey (Marechal and Hecq, 2005).

sequestration refers to the carbon stored in trees and associated litter. Woodland carbon sequestration rates are complex, with the numerous variables making the calculation an inexact science, i.e. tree species, planting density, management, varying uptake over time, dead wood and leaf litter, soil type, and climate. Moor Trees worked on the basis that the type of woodland that it planted - the Upland Oakwood (referred to in the European Union Habitats Directive as Atlantic Oakwood⁴¹, which form part of the Dartmoor Habitat Action Plan for Woodland) - sequesters approximately 75 tC per hectare over a 100 year life-cycle. This figure was derived through a review of peer-reviewed forestry literature, when it became clear that estimates for UK woodland sequestration varied greatly due to the above variables (Benitez *et al.*, 2007; Bishop *et al.*, 2008; Cannell, 1999; Cannell and Milne, 1995; Gough and Shackley, 2002).

Moor Trees' planting methodology was then based on Forestry Commission guidelines for broad-leaf woodland plants around 1100 trees per hectare (as stated by the Moor Trees Woodland Manager at interview). This equated to 15 trees per tonne of carbon, or 4 trees per tonne of carbon dioxide. What this means, for example, is that a consumer emitting 100 tC per year would need to plant 1,500 trees per year to offset the 100 tonnes. The programme quantified the consumer's carbon liability (tonnes of carbon per annum) via the Moor Trees online calculator using National Energy Foundation data to calculate travel (car, rail and air) and energy use emissions (Moor Trees, 2006; National Energy Foundation, 2006). It then converted the tC into the tree planting requirement for carbon sequestration. The programme has now been operational for nearly four years. A wide range of actors have been engaged in the programme as consumers, including representatives from all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum. Thus, it provided an interesting, first-hand study of how a small,

⁴¹ Atlantic Oakwoods are identified as habitat of high importance in the European Union's Habitats Directive. The Oakwoods are restricted to the Atlantic coastal fringes of Britain, France, Ireland and Spain. They are described in the UK Biodiversity Plan as 'Upland Oakwoods', and are recognised as Britain's temperate rainforest. Atlantic Oakwoods are found in areas that have a damp, humid climate with high rainfall and acidic soils that have not been altered by human activity, such as cultivation (Forestry Commission, (no date A)). This type of woodland is dominated by Oak, with stands of Alder and Ash.

bottom-up, community-based project is engaged in cross-sector partnership-working towards the delivery of top-down EPPP.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed Moor Trees and its partnership network as the case study providing the empirical focus for this research. It highlighted the AES and EWGS as examples of state-funding programmes increasingly working with non-state actors to deliver their operational objectives. The chapter also presented OPEP as a typical MTPN partnership that engaged state and non-state actors towards the delivery of state PPP, highlighting the themes of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability that are analysed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this study. It then discussed the VCMs, which are further analysed in Section 7.6.2. It should be noted at this point that these case studies are not exhaustive, with further partnerships and funding programmes introduced in Chapter 7 (regarding accountability structures) and Chapter 8 (concerning partnership-working).

Thus, this chapter has highlighted how the MTPN provides provided examples of:

1. Multi-actor, cross-sector partnerships, that are indicative of the new environmental governance (Hutchinson, 1994; Worthington *et al.*, 2003; Goodwin, 1998; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Raco *et al.*, 2006).
2. The transferring of power and responsibility (and blurring of boundaries towards) to the community level (Raco, 2006; Stoker, 1997; Thompson, 2005).
3. The entrepreneurial approach of commodifying natural resources to alter the form and the substance of environmental governance to rely more on market-based strategies and non-state actors (Cashore, 2002; Morris, 2008).

Having highlighted the empirical focus and defined the methodological approach, Chapter 5 reports on data collected from the MTPN to consider if and how the state is devolving responsibility for EPPP to non-state actors.

Chapter 5: The Devolution of Responsibility of EPPP to Non-state Actors by the State

5.1 Introduction

Using the MTPN as a case study, this chapter analyses the idea that the state is devolving responsibility and authority for environmental decision-making and the delivery of EPPP to the non-state, or grassroots, actor level through discourses of community responsibility, partnership-working and self-governing. It has been argued that this transferring of power to the community level brings new community involvement and the sharing of responsibilities between the state and non-state actors through partnership-working (Fairbrass, 2003; Raco, 2006; Thompson, 2005). Seen as the central pillars of sustainable development and key components of environmental governance, this 'hollowing out of the state' has also made it difficult for citizens to attribute responsibility for programme quality, effectiveness and efficiency of delivery to any one actor due to the devolution of power and their (multi-actor) complexity and unelected nature (Jepson 2005, Jessop 1998, Yarwood 2002).

An important component of governance and sustainable development, argued Raco (2006), is the inclusion of non-state actors in policy formulation and delivery. In seeking to analyse this argument, this chapter draws on action research, an online survey, and semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the MTPN. It begins by addressing state-devolved responsibility as a central pillar to sustainable development through a series of statements against which survey respondents measured their opinion on a five point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Themes were then identified and subsequently explored through 20 semi-structured interviews, including the concepts of the 'hollowing out of the state', 'active citizenship', and local knowledge. The chapter then explores one of the key themes of this thesis, the issue of resource deficit, or, the perceived lack of funding for the

third sector to deliver state-formulated EPPP, and how the sector is trying to overcome this through full cost recovery (see also Chapter 8). Following this, the chapter analyses how MTPN private sector actors are increasingly becoming active in EPPP delivery.

5.2 Devolved Responsibility in Environmental Partnerships

Action research provided data on the state devolving responsibility for sustainability initiatives, with an online survey and interviews bringing additional data to support analysis of identified themes. Perhaps unsurprisingly due to the environmental context of the case study, MTPN actors were universally found to be engaged with sustainable development, many through day-to-day activities, though most through general awareness. The concept of 'devolved responsibility', however, was one that I directly explored with numerous actors. Whilst rarely quoted in response to my interview probes or during action research communications 'per se', it was frequently implied through use of alternative language. The next section explores some of the attitudes and behaviours of MTPN actors towards the concept and application of devolved responsibility.

5.2.1 MTPN Actor Attitudes and Behaviours towards Devolved Responsibility

During the course of this study I created and then managed the OPEP partnership between Moor Trees and HMP Dartmoor (see 4.4, plus 5.3.1 for further detail on OPEP). On one occasion, I joined members of the management team to discuss how the partnership was progressing. Partly in acknowledgement of my researcher-practitioner status, the team discussed at some length how they felt the government increasingly expected the third sector to deliver objectives of, or add value to, a programme that is, and probably always will be, the responsibility of the state i.e. offender sustainability education and training. In the meeting, the comment "It is the government's responsibility to provide extra funding for this; we just

don't have the budget" was made on more than one occasion by non-state and state actors alike. This comment suggested that actor frustration with devolved responsibility for sustainability objectives is perhaps partly due to them not being directly engaged with the concept by the state. If they had been made more aware that the government is apparently adopting this approach, then perhaps it would have improved engagement and, therefore, PPP delivery. Feedback from the OPEP meeting was noted and subsequently explored through interview with wider, non-OPEP actors. One respondent (Interviewee No. 7, a senior civil servant) commented on the lack of funding made available by the state to non-state actors facilitate the devolution process:

"We receive regular top-down directives regarding sustainability but have to date received no significant additional budget to help develop the programme with third sector partners. Westminster, on the one hand is obsessed by sustainable development, but on the other will not resource us, saying that we should work with community partners to access new funds. I just don't have the time to do it and community partners shouldn't be relied upon in that way".

Survey Respondent No. 37 (from the third sector) concurred: "The government is devolving responsibilities but not the adequate funds or authority for environmental objectives to be met." This frustration was supported by a third sector survey respondent, who wrote:

"I believe environmental objectives can be achieved at community level but the responsibility should remain with government and shared with the community. The government should not be absolved of responsibility." (Survey Respondent No. 15).

A further (public sector) survey respondent provided feedback suggesting that again, whilst conceptually sound, devolved responsibility has a fundamentally flawed delivery mechanism

due to an inconsistent and at times confused communications strategy. Ultimately, however, the respondent concluded that devolved responsibility (for addressing environmental objectives) has significant potential:

“I believe that it should be a shared and not a shifting responsibility between government and partnerships / communities. There are certain responsibilities and actions that need taking at government level to influence increased actions and responsibilities to be taken at partnership / community level, and vice versa. Unfortunately there is not a common and consistent approach to the relay of environmental objectives and responsibilities, messages, policy, resources and approaches across government, let alone between government and partnerships / communities. This is a big drawback, but the benefits, if this is addressed adequately, could be huge” (Survey Respondent No. 23).

These responses suggested an awareness of the downward shift by the state in sustainability objectives, but also frustration regarding the lack of resources to (see Section 5.3). Interviewee No. 1 (public sector) thought that funding and bureaucracy are key:

“Budgets are being cut and the government is looking at local communities to assist with sustainable development. Funding is very competitive and voluntary input is becoming a pre-requisite for local groups to firstly establish themselves and then remain (financially) sustainable long enough to make a real impact. Regrettably, state-offered assistance (referring to expertise, as opposed to funding) is often hard to come by and very localised against socio-economic drivers and measurements, such as the IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation).”

These comments made me consider if the state's desire for, and promotion of, sustainable development was either not matched by their commitment to deliver, or if there was simply an implementation gap or failure in the delivery framework that the state was trying to address through community involvement. This question was, in part, addressed by a QUANGO survey respondent who suggested that the state is often engaged purely in rhetoric:

"The government runs various community partnerships to deliver environmental and sustainability objectives. After a lot of meetings, consultant reports, fancy websites and guidelines on good practice, many just fade away without any perceivable impact. Until intention is matched by delivery, the third sector will remain cynical that the government has a real agenda to engage the community" (Survey Respondent No. 40).

This is indeed a powerful statement, especially coming from a QUANGO actor, including an arguably accusational tone suggesting poor use of funds and a hidden agenda. Another (private sector) respondent also included points regarding delivery and communications:

"While trying to shift delivery to community level, there is little power or resources allocated which creates a large disparity between stated objectives and resourcing of supposed delivery partners. Decisions are made above community level with poor consultation to design realistic delivery programmes. Again, partnerships only work if operations management and communications are both of high quality" (Survey Respondent No. 16).

Interviewee No. 16 (third sector) highlighted communications, resourcing, and delivery:

"While trying to shift delivery to the community level, there is little power and insufficient resources allocated to the community. This creates a large disparity

between sustainable development objectives and resourcing of supposed delivery partners. Decisions are made above community level with poor consultation to design realistic delivery programmes. Again, partnerships only work if operations management and communications are both of high quality.”

What is clear, however, is the overwhelming opinion that (conceptually) community engagement (or devolved responsibility) is important to meet (sustainable development) environmental objectives. Indeed, 70% of survey respondents agreed that *the shift of responsibility from the government to community level is important to meet environmental objectives*, with 9% having no opinion and 17% disagreeing.

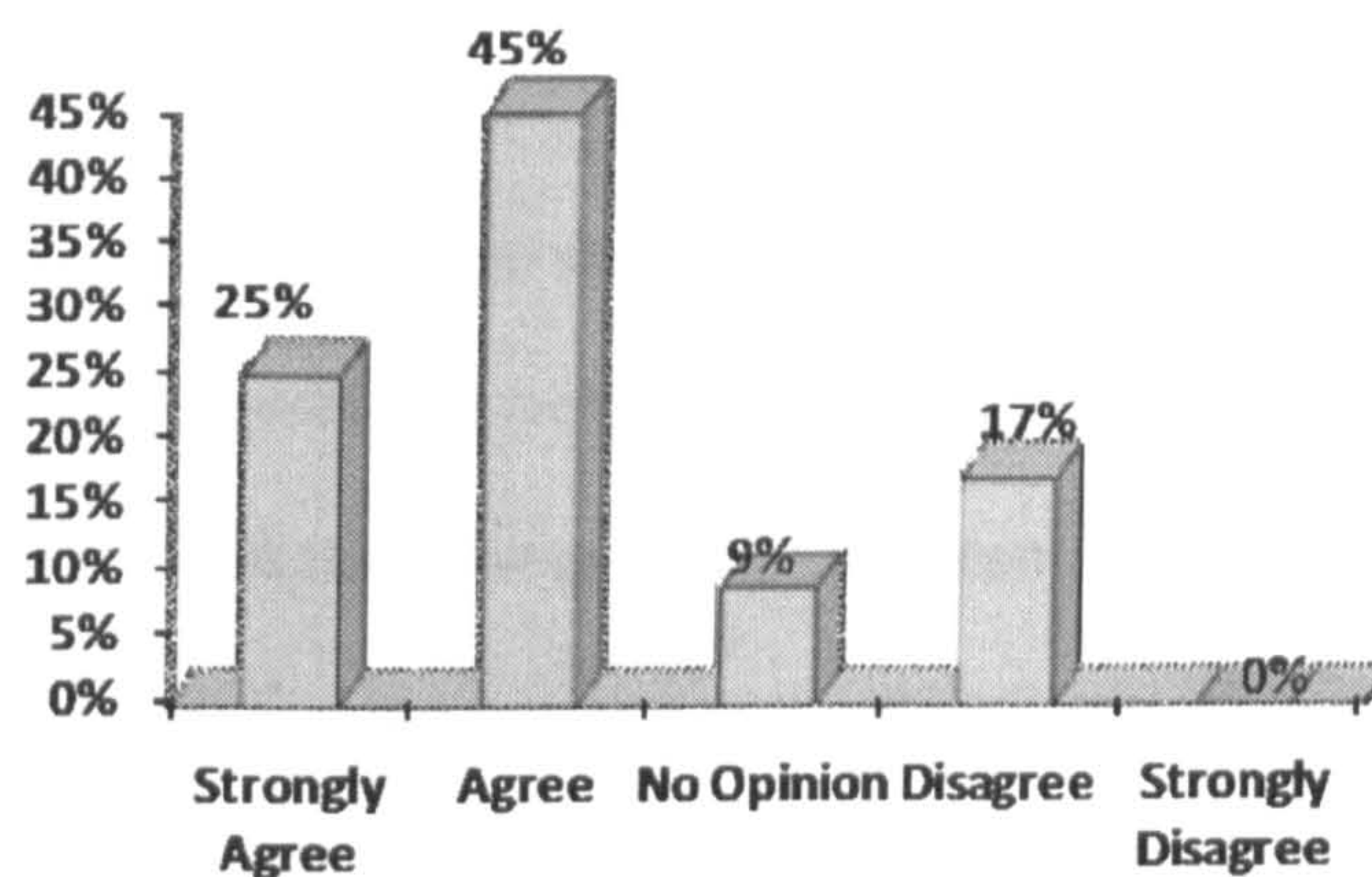


Figure 5.1: ‘The shift of responsibility from the government to community level is important to meet environmental objectives’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

Of the 70% in agreement, the sector stratification was as follows:

	Public	QUANGO	third	Private
Sample size	26	24	60	44
Strongly Agree / Agree	18	18	44	28
%	69	75	73	64

Table 5.1: Sector Stratification of Responses

Table 5.1 shows that, in proportion to the sample size, responses were consistent across all four levels, thus showing no signs of bias that directly relates to the sector type i.e. public sector. Had public sector response made up a significant percentage of the 'Strongly Agree' response, for example, then this may well have presented an example of respondent bias. Survey responses included further enforcement of this support, including:

"The bottom up approach is vital to build community ownership and thus sustainability into environmental initiatives" (Survey Respondent No. 4, public sector).

"Local ownership of environmental issues is essential for real and lasting changes to be made" (Survey Respondent No. 27, public sector).

Data collected from the MTPN regarding devolved responsibility for sustainable development provided a mixed set of attitudes and beliefs. On the one hand it is widely supported as a concept, but on the other hand the delivery framework is considered to be either non-existent or at best poorly constructed⁴², thus generating doubt and cynicism regarding government intentions. However, 'active citizenship' (see also Section 5.2.2), whereby the individual is expected to take responsibility by becoming an 'active citizen', is central to the current government's agenda. This point was also made by a third sector Survey Respondent No. 74 (third sector) who stated that "I don't experience it as shifting from the hierarchies to the networks, more a case of individuals, groups and communities increasingly taking responsibility for themselves." In the absence of far greater resources, argued Pearce and Mawson (2003) and efforts to build genuine community capacity, this attempt to transfer responsibility to local communities may be illusory. This raises doubts about whether the state

⁴² Kofi Annan (2000, in Hemmati 2002:1) highlighted the need for an effective delivery mechanism when he argued that '*Traditional processes of coordination need to be supplemented by a series of practical arrangements which provide for more active, cooperative management*'.

is really seeking to engage the citizen or is simply attempting to engage non-state actors in the delivery of its own objectives to save time and resources.

5.2.2 'Hollowing Out the State': Engaging the Citizen, or Shirking Responsibilities?

This study situates devolved responsibility for sustainable development as the downward component of Jessop's (1995) 'hollowing out of the state', where certain state functions, aims and objectives are redistributed and / or allocated to non-state actors. Observations and secondary sources have provided evidence of the government's discourse on sustainable development, both directly and through QUANGOs. The following text was taken from DirectGov (2008) - the official website of the UK Government - as their official statement regarding the four key areas of sustainable development. Sustainable development covers a very wide range of activities. In the UK, four key areas have been identified:

- *Sustainable consumption and production* - changing the way products and services are designed, produced, used and disposed of - in short, achieving more with less
- *Climate change and energy* - reducing global greenhouse gas emissions whilst at the same time preparing for the climate change that cannot be avoided
- *Natural resources* - understanding the limits of the natural resources that sustain life, such as water, air and soil
- *Sustainable communities* - looking after the places people live and work, for example, by developing green, open spaces and building energy-efficient homes

However, it appears that outputs have, in reality, been low compared to state PPP objectives. Experiences gained through working within the environmental sector have also painted a complex picture of rhetoric, action, bureaucracy, collaboration and dysfunction. My experiences in this downward shift have been gained, for the most part, through working

alongside or observing QUANGOs such as (not exclusively) the South West Regional Development Agency, Envirowise, The Carbon Trust, two different AONBs and Natural England. During this time, I witnessed various dialogue regarding the need for 'grassroots engagement', 'community action', 'active citizenship', and 'people power'. Comparable levels of action, however, have rarely followed, with bureaucracy and dysfunctional collaborations (argued by some to be due to complexity) mooted by many actors as the underpinning reason for poor delivery. Indeed, as one public sector actor commented:

"That's the Audit Commission for you. Our funds are so tightly controlled that we are unable to run our community engagement programmes successfully, as they need to be flexible and dynamic and if we do step out of the box we have to spend hours justifying our actions."

In its defence, the Audit Commission's (2009) mission statement is:

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone. Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

In remaining objective, it is possibly unfair, therefore, to expect the Audit Commission to support flexibility and dynamism in the spending of funds due to the very nature of their work i.e. safeguarding taxpayer's money. As an organisation it is, however, considered to be indicative of a wider government department approach to stifling grassroots action through its audit culture (Jepson, 2005).

The survey further asked MTPN environmental actors if they considered partnerships to be increasingly responsible for the delivery of government environmental objectives, or, EPPP. Of the 154 respondents, 78% either agreed or strongly agreed, with 16% having no opinion and only 6% disagreeing. Of the 78% in agreement, the sector stratification was as follows:

	Public	QUANGO	third	Private
Sample size	26	24	60	44
Strongly Agree / Agree	24	19	45	29
%	92	79	75	66

Table 5.2: Sector Stratification of Responses

Source: Author

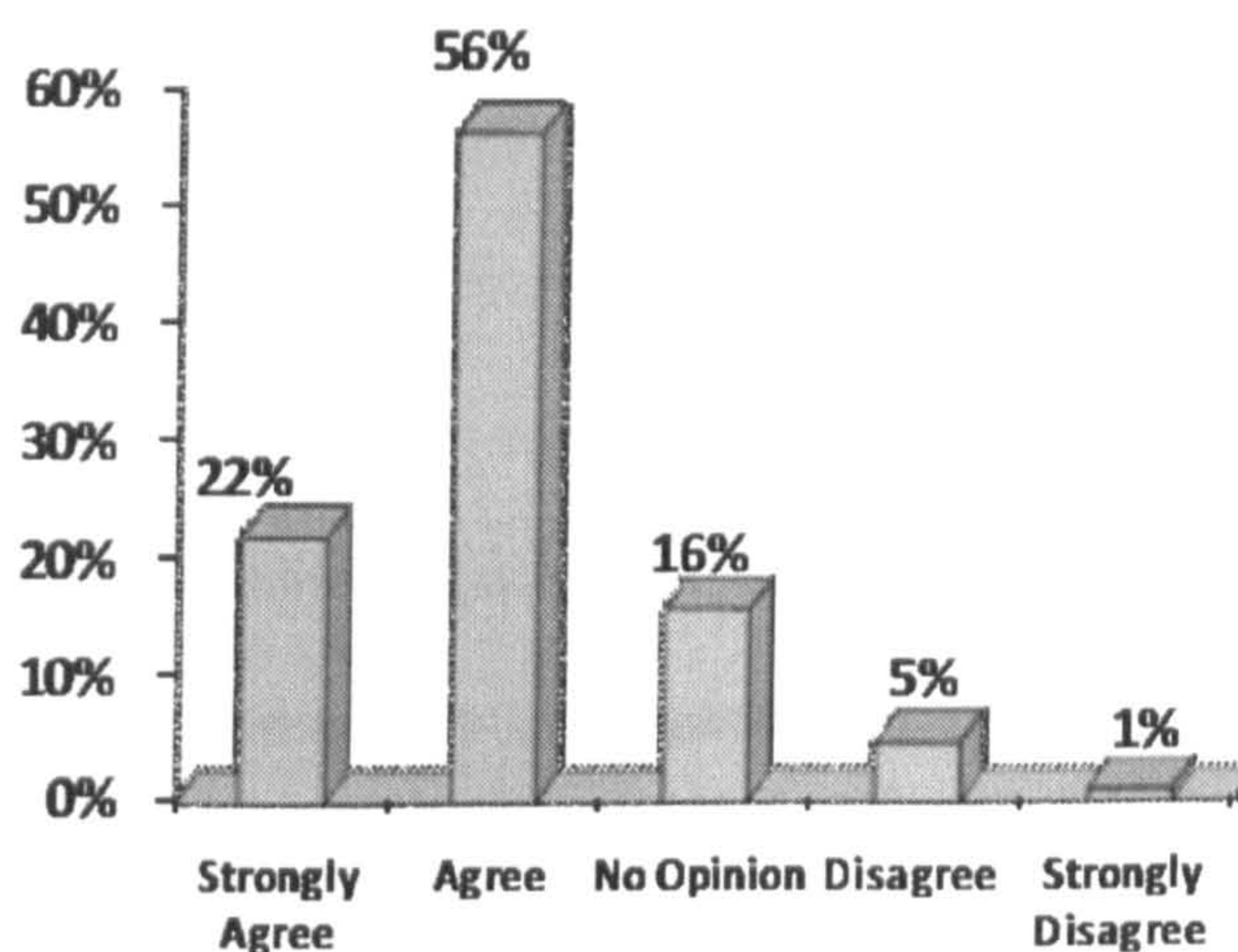


Figure 5.2: 'Partnerships are increasingly responsible for the delivery of government environmental objectives'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

Initial data followed a similar pattern to the previous section, where the survey data showed a large majority 'in agreement' with the principle of devolved responsibility (through partnership-working) for the delivery of environmental objectives (or, sustainable

development). When invited to comment further, respondents were more critical. For example:

“Although devolution of responsibility is to be applauded it must be accompanied by commensurate responsibility and adequate funding otherwise it simply becomes an abdication of responsibility - which is where we currently are” (private sector Survey Respondent No. 71).

“It will only work if the government is consistent in pushing the correct environmental agenda which complements delegated work strands” (QUANGO Survey Respondent No. 31).

“The government has unrealistic expectations of partnerships” (QUANGO Survey Respondent No. 33).

This presents the continued theme of a breakdown between *concept* and *application* i.e. devolved responsibility for sustainable development is conceptually embraced, but its implementation is flawed. This links with Curry (2001), who argued that state / non-state partnerships can empower individuals with a stake in society to help renew a sense of responsibility (*concept*), but only if done successfully (*application*). An interesting theme that was explored in greater depth by interview, which asked the question:

- Do you think that the idea of devolving responsibility to non-state, or grassroots, actors is one that is practicable in ‘real life’, i.e. Is it a concept or theory that can really be applied?

“Business is the main polluter, so we should be held responsible. What we do need, however, is a more distinct system to report our progress firstly to government, and then to society” Interviewee No. 2 (public sector).

“The government funds QUANGOs like us to meet their community targets” Interviewee No. 6 (QUANGO).

“Depends on local politics for the degree to which 'partners' are actually 'partners' and not just an adjunct delivery vehicle for other priorities by other organisations” Interview No. 8 (private sector).

Rhodes (1996:653) argued that governance authoritatively allocates resources to, and exercises control and coordination of, non-state actors. Jessop (1994, 1995, 2002) and MacLeod and Goodwin (1999), expanded this principle, arguing that the state is being ‘hollowed-out’ through the selective displacement of powers *upwards* to the international level, *downwards* to the regional or local level, and *horizontally* to inter-regional or trans-local organisations. This research is addressing the *downward* trend, with findings suggesting that it is indeed this devolved responsibility (from government to the community) that has become linked to EPPP *delivery*. Gibbs and Jonas (2000:303) also argued, however, that despite the UK Government having explicitly devolved environmental responsibilities downwards, this has not necessarily undermined the authoritative resources of the state whilst ‘empowering the local’. Thus, research suggests an approach of ‘top-down devolved responsibility’ aiming for a heterarchical structure whilst operating within a hierarchical framework. As Yarwood (2002:289) argued, ‘rather than a new form of governance, this (partnership) approach implies government from a distance implicit in the hollowing out of the state’ (see also Mackinnon, 2000; and Raco and Imrie, 2000). Further, Leat (2004, in Jepson, 2005) argued that this ‘roll

back of the state' makes it very difficult for citizens to attribute responsibility to any one institution or individual for the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of delivery.

5.2.3 Active Citizenship and Local Knowledge

Despite the anxieties surrounding funding and responsibility, community involvement is widely considered to be essential for sustainable development by bringing local knowledge to bear and by developing a greater sense of responsibility for the management of their areas (Pearce and Mawson, 2003). The phrase 'active citizenship' increasingly appears in language used by a variety of government papers and company Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports. An analysis of secondary sources shows that as early as 1995 the Rural White Paper's ethos of 'Action for All' aimed to place responsibility on individuals and what has now become the third sector to work together to tackle local issues (DoE and MAFF, 1995, in Yarwood, 2002). Further, in the foreword to Tony Blair's 1998 report *Bringing Britain together: A national strategy for neighbourhood renewal*, he said:

"Too much has been imposed from above, when experience shows that success depends on communities themselves having the power and taking the responsibility to make things better' (SEU, 1998, in Pearce and Mawson, 2003)".

Active citizenship was originally situated within the context of neighbourhood renewal but has subsequently become the perceived norm for sustainable development, with Raco *et al.* (2006) framing it as a 'central pillar' of sustainable development. Interestingly, action research and the observation of numerous cross-sector meetings, seminars and conferences, suggested that the phrase remains somewhat marginalised. The concept, however, is not, with examples drawn from the online survey:

“Local ownership of environmental issues is essential for real and lasting changes to be made” (Survey Respondent No. 27, public sector).

“Everyone should take responsibility for the quality of their environment and the impact they have on it” (Survey Respondent No. 13, public sector).

“I believe that it should be a shared and not a shifting responsibility between government and partnerships / communities. There are certain responsibilities and actions that need taking at government level to influence increased actions and responsibilities to be taken at partnership / community level, and vice versa. Unfortunately there is not a common and consistent approach to the relay of environmental objectives and responsibilities, messages, policy, resources and approaches across government, let alone between government, partnerships and communities” (Survey Respondent No. 32, QUANGO).

Indeed, Interviewee No. 5 (a QUANGO Education Officer) highlighted ‘localness’ as a key characteristic of sustainable development and emphasised its importance regarding the sharing of knowledge and the potential synergies that can be created:

“Of course devolved responsibility is important, sustainable development can only be achieved through a grassroots approach and we are seeing this more and more in schools, including where they work with local charities and trusts to diversify experiential learning opportunities.”

One of the core rationales for this grassroots approach is ‘local knowledge’, a concept now enacted at the environmental policy and programme level to adapt to local circumstances (Pearce and Mawson, 2003). For example, Defra’s HLS scheme allows for adaptation of local

knowledge to enable flexibility within its management prescription (see Section 4.3). The HLS adopted this approach from its predecessor, the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which farmers believed was too regimented and with local knowledge disregarded (Franks and McGloin, 2006). This was confirmed by private sector Survey Respondent (No. 68), who stated that; "Projects benefit from local people through their knowledge and experience of the area." Data also suggest that there is an issue regarding state rhetoric compared to grassroots action, a point noted by Taylor (2007:298), who argued that 'community engagement rhetoric (is) far outpacing the reality of partnerships (action) on the ground'. These data also suggest that local knowledge is conceptually placed as a subset of active citizenship, which itself is argued to be the vehicle for social and environmental change. Sampford (2002:79) argued that 'This bottom-up approach reflects an increasing value placed on local knowledge and the idea that environmental governance is about involving and implementing human solutions through values, institutions and practices'. However, he continues that finding and implementing these solutions are some of the main challenges of environmental governance. Active citizenship also has a link to responsibility, with citizens required to be active in their own government i.e. the citizen as a self-governing individual (Brand, 2007).

What these agendas also represent, argue Raco and Imrie (2000), is the transformation to a self-governing capacity whereby governance is conducted in and through the governed, whilst control mechanisms are retained from above. Perhaps therein lays the problem of the implementation gap between policy and practice - that the conceptual approach of the active citizen mobilising to build a critical mass for change is ultimately constrained by over-arching state control mechanisms (see Section 7.3). This may well be the case, but findings also suggested that a lack of resources plays a critical role.

5.3 The Resource Deficit

This section draws on data collected from action research, online survey and interviews to analyse state (and non-state) resource availability to the environmental sector. In this context, resource deficit refers to the lack of funding made available by state and non-state actors engaged in the devolved responsibility for sustainable development.

5.3.1 Environmental Sector Funding

A QUANGO Interviewee (No. 8), when asked about devolved responsibility, stated it is “not a problem if sufficient funds follow the devolution. Currently they don't”. This statement was under-pinned by 79% of survey respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the survey statement; *The government allocates sufficient funding to enable this devolved approach*. The data showed lack of funding to be widely acknowledged by actors from across the four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum, including the public sector, as a root cause of partnership failure. These findings were further compounded through online survey responses, including:

“There is never sufficient government funding” (Survey Respondent No. 1, public sector).

“The key issue here, is government funding” (Survey Respondent No. 51, third sector).

“Insufficient resources are available to sustain voluntary or community sectors” (Survey Respondent No. 18, private sector).

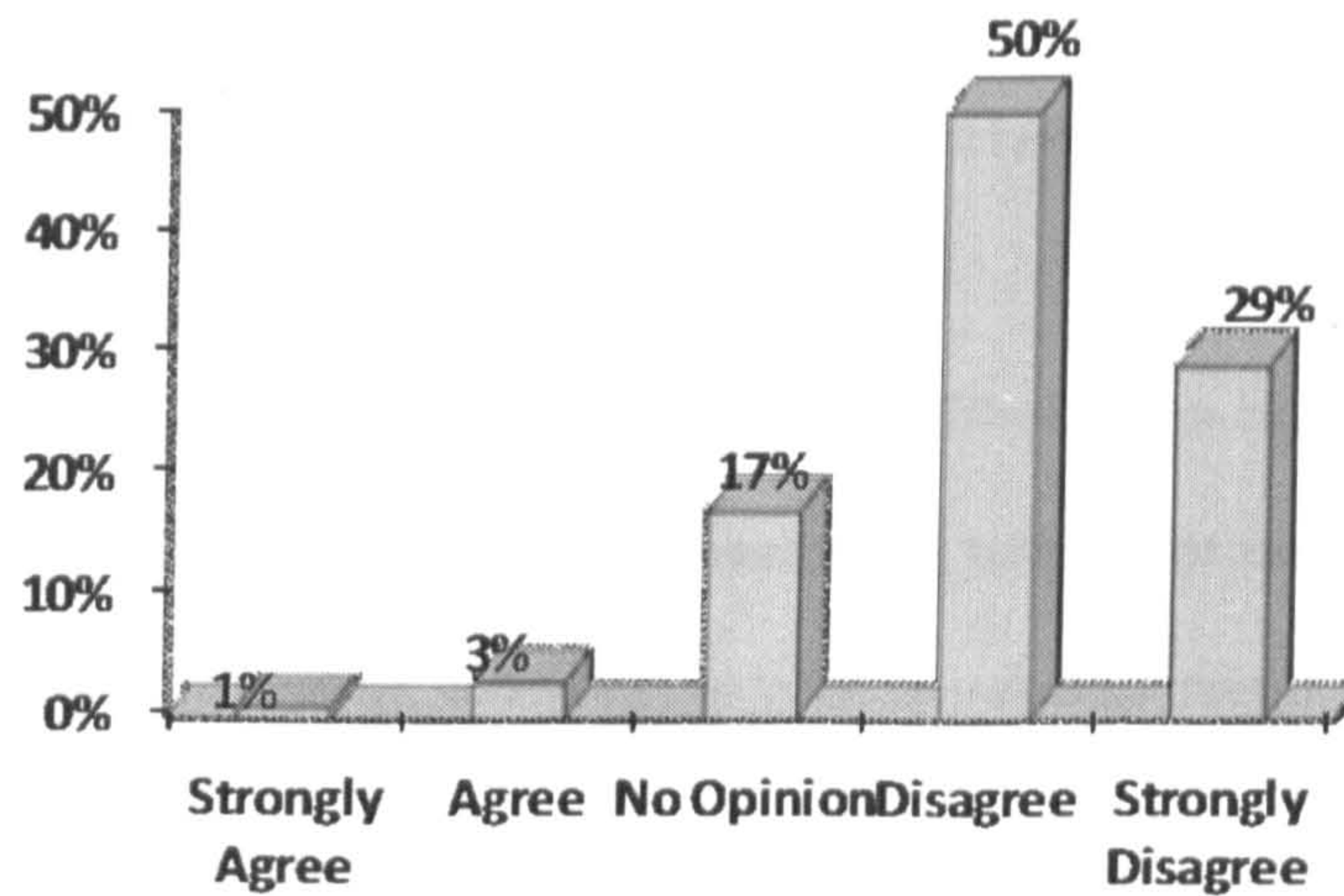


Figure 5.3: 'The government allocates sufficient funding to enable this devolved approach'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

Empirical findings from the MTPN strongly suggested a lack of government funding, whilst literature contends that partnership-working offers many advantages for development including increased funding opportunities (Hodge, 2007; Martin, 1995; Pearce and Mawson, 2009; Thompson, 2005; Yarwood, 2002). This contention is supported by secondary sources promoting New Labour's approach to the funding of partnerships. For example:

- The government's 2005 white paper (HM Government, 2005) '*Securing the future – delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy*', lists programmes such as the:
 - Climate Change Communications Initiative with funding of at least £12m for 2005 to 2008 to 'tackle public attitudes to, and understanding of, climate change, and what we can each do to help reduce our personal contribution to climate change'; and
 - 'Up to £2 million support for a Resource Efficiency and Waste Knowledge Transfer Network.'

The same white paper reported on government funding made available through its Environmental Action Fund for distribution to the third sector (for sustainable development programmes):

'Thirty-six projects have been offered government funding for the three years 2005-2008, totalling £6.75 million, following the latest round of competitive bids for support from the Environmental Action Fund. These projects cover the whole of England, and involve working with a diverse set of communities on a wide range of issues, which will help deliver sustainable consumption and production outcomes.'

86% of survey respondents agreed with the statement "They (partnerships) increase the financial resources available to individual partners".

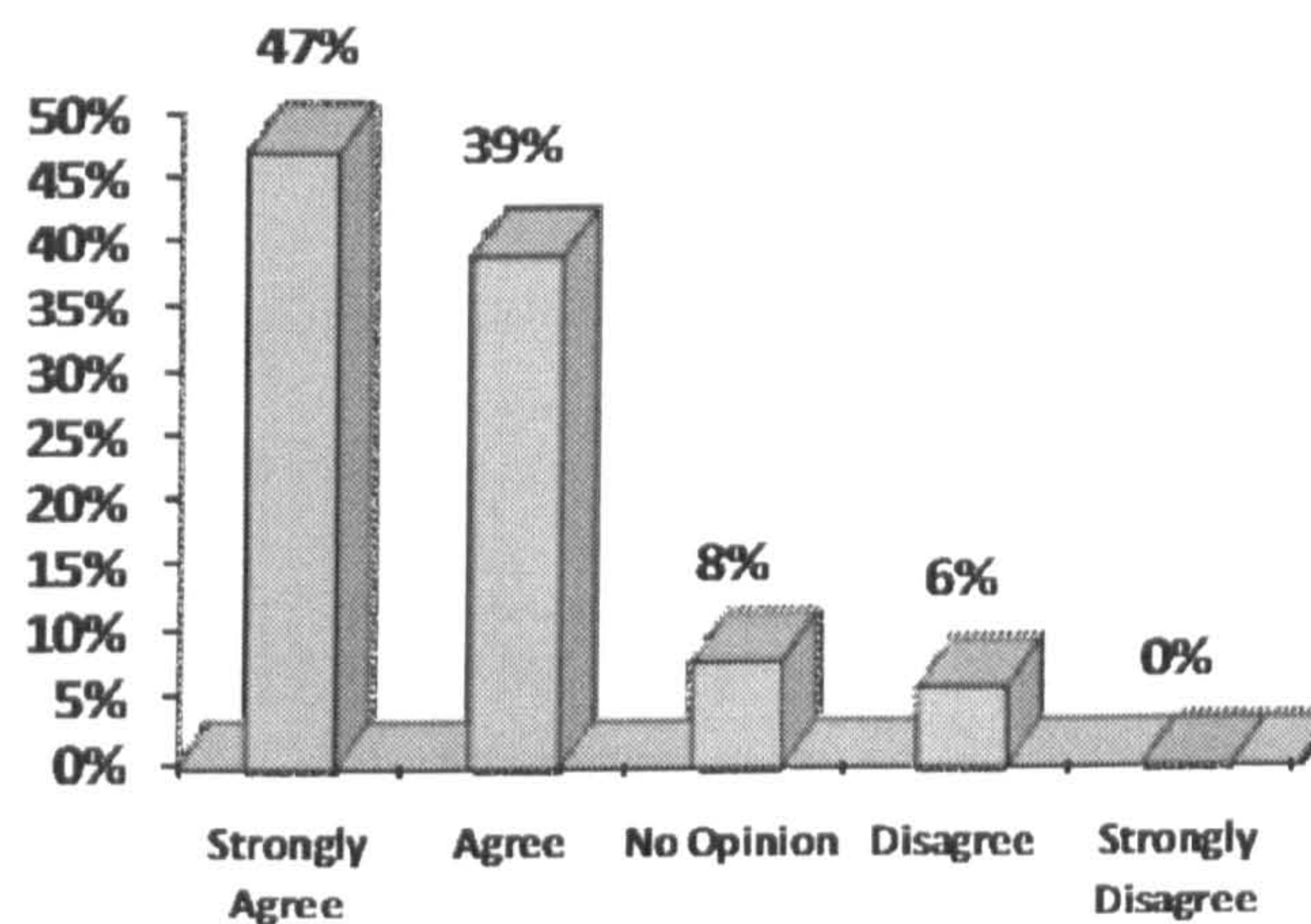


Figure 5.4: 'They increase the financial resources available to individual partners'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

This presented a conflict in opinion, with, on the one hand, concerns regarding the *availability* of government funding, but, on the other, arguments being made regarding the *theory* that partnerships increase funding opportunities. The next section explores this further through an analysis of environmental sector funding.

As a charity director, it became apparent that a disproportionate amount of time is spent by third sector employees on fund-raising and donor management⁴³. It was noted through liaison with a number of grant-funded third sector actors that this is commonplace, often to the detriment of other core activities including, for example, human resources, statutory compliance, marketing, and business and partnership development. First-hand experience and ongoing engagement with actors in similar third sector roles led to the conclusion that, of the funding streams secured, a comparatively small percentage was from government sources⁴⁴. This was qualified through an assessment of the Moor Trees fund-raising programme, which includes continuous engagement with a wide variety of funders, including trusts, NGOs, the National Lottery, UK government and the European Union. Grant funding received by Moor Trees for the year ending 31.03.09 showed only 6% coming from UK Government sources.

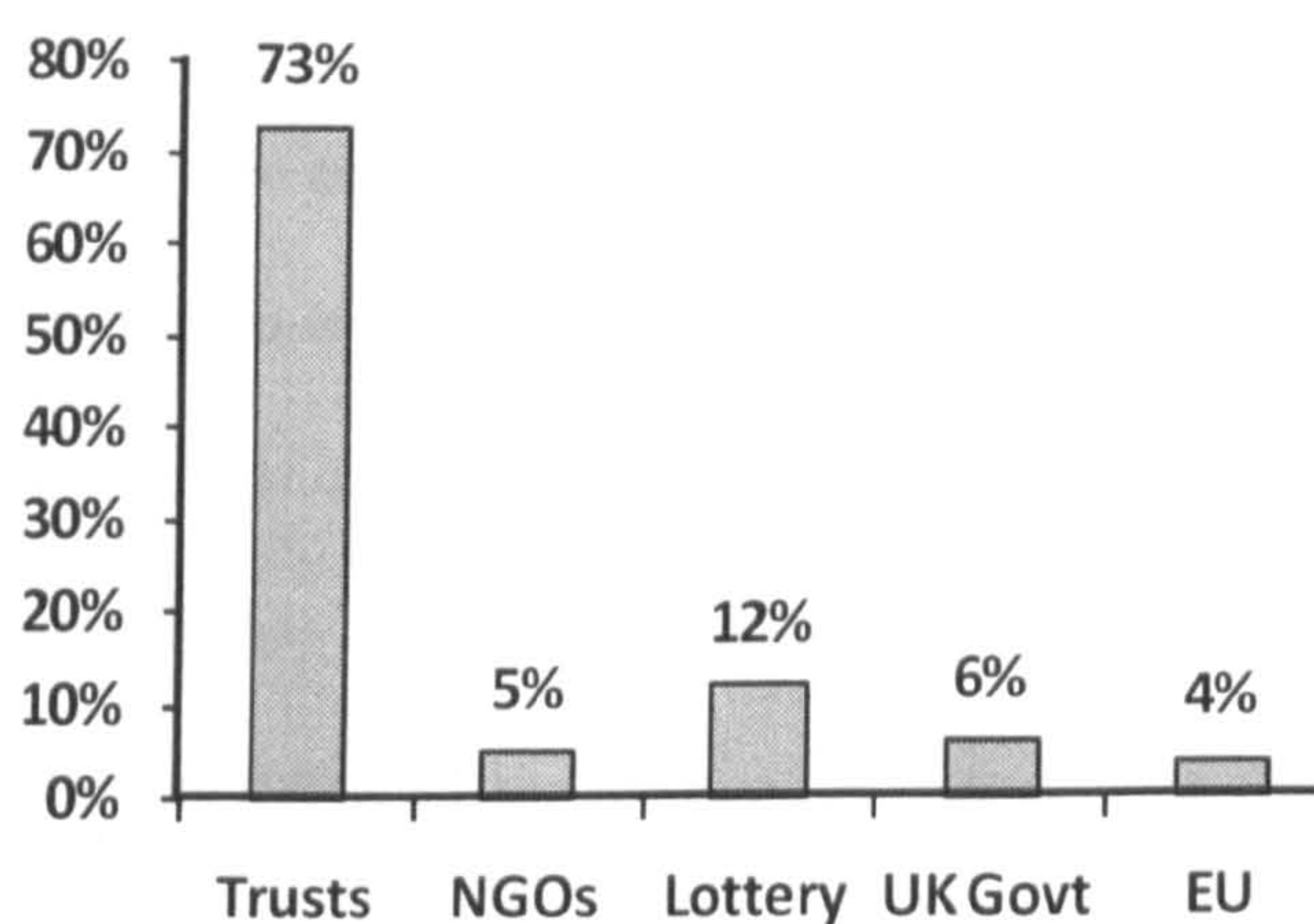


Figure 5.5: Breakdown of Moor Trees Grant Income

Source: Author's Questionnaire

When compared to Moor Trees outputs attributable to government targets, there is a lack of reciprocal funding. For example, during the (woodland) planting season of 07 / 08, Moor Trees

⁴³ Liaising with and reporting to actors who have donated funds.

⁴⁴ However, 76% of survey respondents highlighted government funding as the main source of income for partnerships they were involved in, suggesting that government funding is available to partnerships. This contrasts with the apparent low percentage of government funding income secured by individual actors, though this research now suggests that *formal partnerships* are required to secure such funding through a joint application process, perhaps for the reasons of formalised accountability structures (see 7.2.1) and / or associated control mechanisms (see 7.3.2).

was the largest contributor to the woodland component of the Dartmoor Local Biodiversity Action Plan (of which Moor Trees is an *informal* partner). For that financial year, however, no government funding was received toward this aim, yet Moor Trees' outputs were used by the state towards its own targets.

A further example is the Moor Trees volunteering programme. Each year Moor Trees works with hundreds of volunteers from schools, special needs groups, refugees and asylum seekers, unemployed, and retired. Many of these beneficiary types are targeted by government programmes, one being the government's Sustainable Communities Plan, which highlights the provision of volunteering opportunities for people with mental health problems. The Dartmoor National Park Authority Woodland Strategy (2005 - 2010), also highlights the benefits of Moor Trees' volunteers in the delivery of its woodland targets:

'Community-based tree projects, such as the Woodland Trust and Moor Trees, are helping to achieve woodland creation targets. Their projects are of a very high environmental quality and can involve large numbers of volunteers. The work of Moor Trees, for instance, has helped landowners to establish 4.5 hectares of native woodland through their free advisory service and provision of trees and volunteers.'

The Devon Local Area Agreement (2008 - 2018) highlights volunteering for young people:

Priority Theme Three - Community Vibrancy

The Sustainable Community Strategy seeks to improve physical and electronic access to key services and advice for all groups in society, particularly in isolated areas. It aims to ensure that communities develop in such a way that people are proud of where they live and want to help others by supporting opportunities for increasing community activity and volunteering, particularly amongst young people.

The above shows government PPP devolving responsibility for sustainable development objectives, a point in-part addressed in the online survey question which asked for comment on the statement “Partnerships have become an important tool for the delivery of environmental programmes”, to which 96% of respondents agreed.

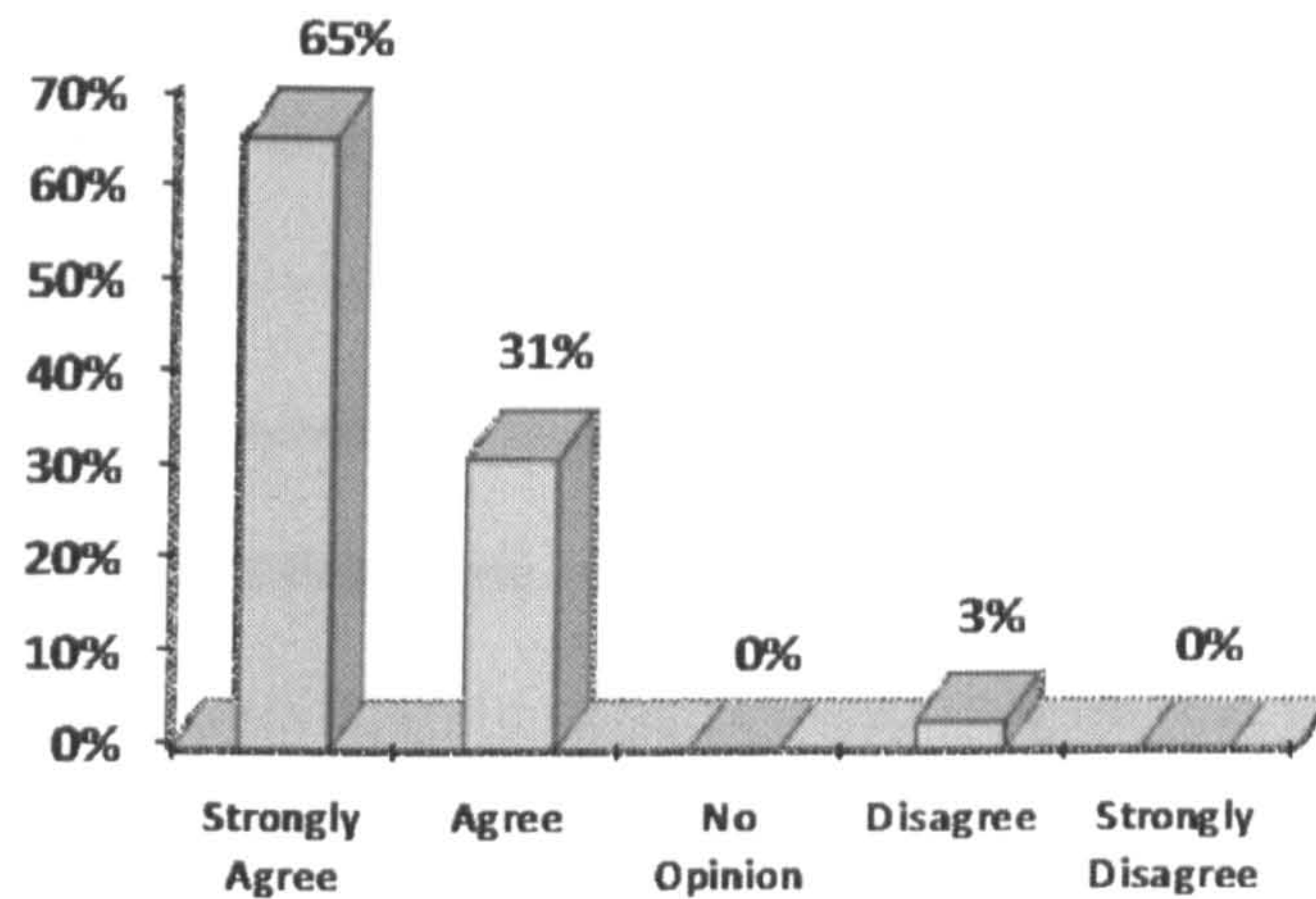


Figure 5.6: ‘Partnerships have become an important tool for the delivery of environmental programmes’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (2008) also stated that “Biodiversity conservation is a devolved responsibility in the UK”. My observations of, and work within, the conservation sector led me to conclude that biodiversity partnerships are rarely supported by state funding. Further evidence to support this was collected from the survey:

“Government passing responsibility for achieving objectives to the local level could work effectively as it allows for local responses that are relevant to the locality. However, at the current time there are insufficient resources to allow this to be done as effectively as it should be” (Survey Respondent No. 23, public sector).

“Local partnerships are better placed to deliver...but adequate resources must be made available from central government. With Natural England / Defra needing to drastically trim budgets, this is not going to happen” (Survey Respondent No. 8, a QUANGO).

My conclusion was further confirmed by a comment by a member of the House of Commons Environment Audit Committee in 2008:

“The statutory agencies with responsibility for achieving biodiversity targets in national environment strategies have been severely hampered by resource cuts making them unfit for purpose.”

Further issues are raised with the state utilising non-state derived outputs towards their own targets. For example, and as mentioned above, the Dartmoor National Park Local Biodiversity Action Plan included Moor Trees outputs in their own reporting to stakeholders, but with no reciprocal support and little, if any, acknowledgement of work done. Interestingly, the UK Government’s Environment Audit Committee also reported that because the UKBAP was never a fully-funded implementation programme, it relies heavily on contributions from the voluntary sector. Perhaps Survey Respondent No. 14 (a third sector actor) provided an explanation for this apparent lack of support, when commenting:

“High level of complexity of multiple agencies greatly adds to tasks at community / volunteer level and dilutes actual funds available.”

Lack of acknowledgement is a more complex political issue, with findings suggesting that the state is uneasy with acknowledging non-state contributions for fear of new calls for increased funding to the third sector. As a result of this, Moor Trees has withdrawn from the Local

Biodiversity Action Plan partnership but continues to generate the same level of outputs for the most part independent of, and without any collaboration with, Local Biodiversity Action Plan partners. Alongside the lack of funding, a secondary theme was that third sector actors are changing their core aims and objectives to fit government funding streams. As Taylor (2007:306), argues, 'even the promise of increased powers through devolution is taking place against a background of centrally defined targets and continued constraints on mainstream local government funding'. Experiences from Moor Trees and some associated partners support this, with new 'added value' or 'complementary' programmes regularly developed in response to specific, niche or simply more accessible funding opportunities. This was framed by Survey Respondent No. 40 (a third sector actor):

"Organisations can lose their own focus and march to the government drum. It is important that organisations stay independent of government but work with it to achieve common goals" (Survey Respondent No. 44, third sector).

"Despite partnerships being more involved and able to deliver what communities want to change, the funding (often provided by government bodies) very much shapes the work that will be carried out and thus projects will generally follow government policy" (Survey Respondent No. 40, QUANGO).

OPEP is an example of this diversification. The project originally aimed to offer offenders voluntary work on conservation projects but it soon became apparent that working with this group attracted significant new funding opportunities, attracting over £30k of funding in its first 6 months. OPEP expanded its operations further through a partnership with Duchy College to provide accredited short courses. This led to a £40k investment of Learning and Skills Council funds. In total, therefore, this diversification by Moor Trees had secured £70k of new funding (as of October, 2009) to the environmental sector which would have otherwise not

been made available. A member of HMP Dartmoor's management committee (who wished to remain anonymous, but was happy to contribute to this study) commented that this was "A very positive outcome". She then went on to discuss how HMP Dartmoor would have struggled to meet its land-based education and training and biodiversity objectives had OPEP not introduced the funding. This showed how OPEP, as a non-state partnership, had become essential for the delivery of state objectives. 78% of survey respondents also agreed when asked to comment on the statement "Partnerships are increasingly responsible for the delivery of our own objectives". It was interesting to observe how actors such as Moor Trees were diversifying in this way, especially how it developed the project's medium- to long-term financial sustainability⁴⁵ through its education framework. This also overcame the potential dependency on short-term public funding and ensured that the voluntary effort that pre-dated the scheme was not for nothing (Curry 2001; Scott, 2004). However, Greer (2001) and Skelcher *et al.* (1997), contended that this dependence on external funding (especially the Learning and Skills Council funding which originated from central government) restricted the autonomy of the partnership and limited its capacity to develop strategically, especially where output targets that addressed national objectives left little room for response to local needs and requirements. A third sector Interviewee (No. 12) concurred

"This is great and we are undoubtedly producing some great outputs, but we feel more like a government instrument than an engaged community group."

5.3.2 Full Cost Recovery

The third sector has traditionally been supported through government grant-funding and volunteer time. Taylor (2002) argued that government funding focuses on projects rather than more comprehensive approaches to community development, or broader, non-specific

⁴⁵ Many funders now assess actor's wider financial sustainability when evaluating specific applications. As such, unrelated projects that have the potential to generate surplus or 'core' income are welcomed.

support, i.e. through investing in third sector support programmes aimed at building actor sustainability and raising the public profile of the sector as a whole. This study found that sustainability projects typically have a finite term, so when this source of funding runs out (typically at the end of the project term), the potential for a financially sustainable structure becomes a major challenge (Peck and Tickell, 1995, in Greer 2001). With increasing state devolution of responsibility for sustainability objectives to grassroots actors, findings suggest that volunteering is on the increase but funding is becoming increasingly competitive due to the increasing number of third sector actors applying for state funds. In response to this, the government launched the Full Cost Recovery framework in 2002. At the same time, the Labour government also launched a new 'blueprint'⁴⁶ to enable it and the third sector to work together. Developed by Paul Boateng⁴⁷ (the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury) and David Blunkett (the then Home Secretary), a Treasury-led cross-cutting review (HM Treasury, 2002) aimed to overcome barriers⁴⁸ faced by third sector actors in delivering high-quality public services and to facilitate successful, long-term partnerships with the government. The key aims of this blueprint were to:

1. Ensure that the cost of contracts for services reflect the full cost of delivery, including any relevant part of the overhead cost;
2. Move to a more stable funding relationship and ensure that the sector is equipped to work effectively in partnership with government;
3. Involve the third sector in the planning as well as delivery of services;
4. Develop capacity in the sector to achieve equality within partnerships.

(HM Treasury, 2002).

⁴⁶ This followed the Rural White Paper of 2000, which stated the government was committed to '*People living in rural areas being fully involved in developing their community, safeguarding its valued features and shaping the decisions that affect them.... A healthy voluntary and community sector is essential to the effective functioning of society - urban and rural*' (Defra, 2003).

⁴⁷ '*We want a partnership of equals. A two-way relationship where government gives appropriate support to the sector, and the sector uses its experience and expert knowledge to deliver responsive, flexible services to their communities*' (Paul Boateng, in HM Treasury, 2002).

⁴⁸ Primarily the lack of funding.

This document placed funding and partnership-working together, though the emphasis was on funding, i.e. points (1), (2) and (4) of the above. The National Audit Office paper of 2002 further highlighted the concern amongst third sector actors that the government was reluctant to pay for core overhead costs and that third sector charitable funds were increasingly used to subsidise public service delivery:

‘Failure to pay for full costs, where this is appropriate, can threaten value for money in the short and longer term: short term risks to the quality and effectiveness of a service if it is underfunded and reliant on charitable subsidy; in the longer term, possible erosion of third sector reserves, threatening continuity of service and even the supplier, and loss of competitiveness and choice if organisations collapse or withdraw from public service delivery’ (National Audit office, 2007).

The ensuing Full Cost Recovery model sought to meet government commitments regarding its contracts with the third sector. It is now, however, increasingly adopted by third sector actors as a model to strengthen office ‘core’ funds, as opposed to relying on a succession of ‘project-based’ initiatives that often work in parallel with, as opposed to central to, actors’ key aims and objectives (i.e. the Moor Trees OPEP programme). This model includes; (i) technical adjustments to funding bids requesting increased ‘contribution to office overheads’⁴⁹, and, perhaps more importantly, (ii) the development of a services or trading arm to create income against work delivered.

Taking Moor Trees as an example, such work increasingly involves activities such as corporate volunteering, and environmental education and training. These services have historically been offered to the public and private sectors at no cost, though Moor Trees now considers these arrangements to be a partly formalised partnership whereby it charges the ‘client’ full cost

⁴⁹ Action research showed that funders now allow, on average, 20% of requested funding to go to office overheads.

recovery i.e. £500 for a for a corporate volunteering day, to include 1 day planning and 1 day delivery. This £500 is broken down as follows:

Project Officer (2 days)	£180	Incl. 1 day planning and 1 day delivery
Operations Manager (1 day)	£120	
Consumables	£100	Refreshments, gloves
Office overheads (25% of above)	£100	Telephone, stationary, travel
Total:	£500	

Table 5.3: Moor Trees Full Cost Recovery Budget Example

Source: Author

Thus, this research suggests that the cross-sector partnership-working (where one actor is third sector) resulting from devolved responsibility is evolving beyond the traditional benefits of resource synergies and knowledge-sharing⁵⁰ into one where new income is generated. Indeed, 78% of survey respondents agreed that partnerships ‘...provide new market opportunities for your organisation’.

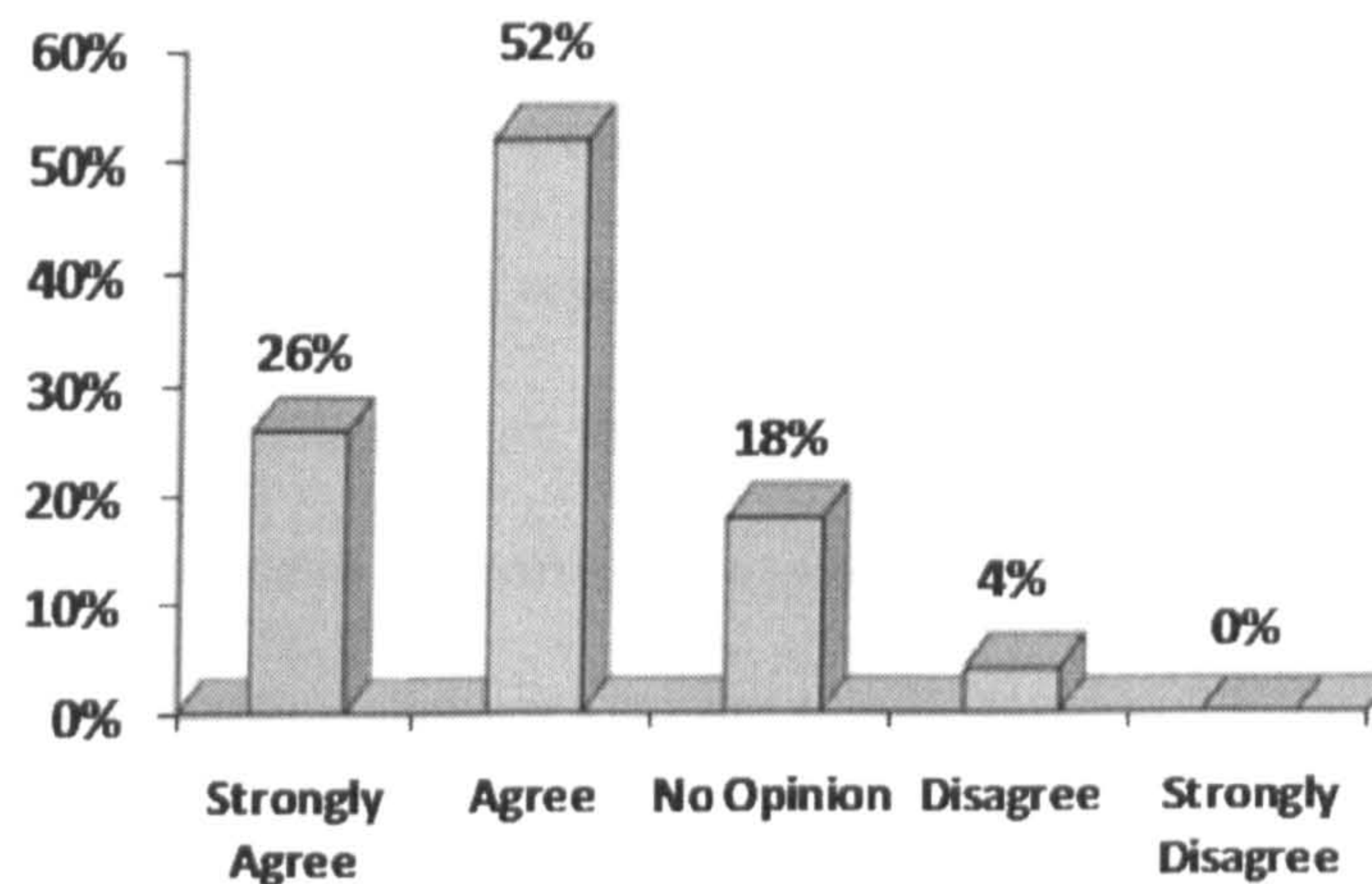


Figure 5.7: 'They provide new market opportunities for your organisation'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

⁵⁰ "Voluntary and community groups have specialist skills and a fresh independent and flexible approach that works. We want to support them and help them improve their delivery of services and make them responsive to the needs of communities' (Home Office Minister Lord Filkin, in HM Treasury, 2002).

Income generation through partnership-led full cost recovery and 'services' is not exclusive to the third sector. Many QUANGOs are adopting a similar approach, one example is the Forestry Commission (2004:8), who are developing income streams through woodland amenity value:

'The Forestry Commission's forests have a great capacity to absorb people while still enabling a feeling of escape from crowds. We can manage woods to provide access for leisure, sustainable tourism and active recreation such as cycling, environmental education and other outdoor pursuits. A great deal could be achieved without environmental damage but much will depend on the building of local partnerships to fund the work.'

Burt (2007) argued that this generation of new infrastructural capacity and capability, plus reduced dependence on government funding through sustainable income generation, is central to government's ambitions in this area and that these initiatives mark out a shift in responsibilities within the state / non-state governance framework. Burt (2007) further argued that financial independence (from government) and new autonomies for the third sector could bring these actors new opportunities and confidence as political actors, so strengthening their position in the Policy Implementation Continuum. Stakeholder participation aims to bring tailored local solutions and increased support for policy-making, but Boonstra (2006) argued that this political shift from the state to the markets transfers responsibility for public issues from the state to individuals and companies. To explore the market-based approach, a number of MTPN actors were asked the following question at interview:

Q. Do you feel that third sector organisations should try to create new income streams through commodifying and then charging for their work when the opportunity arises?

Responses were varied, but for the most part in agreement:

“Yes, this could then lead to project sustainability as project funding usually has a finite term” (Survey Respondent No. 4, public sector).

“It is a difficult transition to make for third sector organisations to start charging for their work, so it needs to be a fine balance between charitable work and full cost recovery. Where they are working in partnership with the private sector though, they should definitely charge” (Survey Respondent No. 6, QUANGO).

“This type of income would usually be classed as unallocated, so the organisation would be able to spend it as it wishes, unlike government funding which would obviously have to be spent on the associated programme” (Survey Respondent No. 15, third sector).

“If third sector organisations adopted a more traditional business model then it would make them more stable, but they would have to be careful when it comes to competitive advantage through government-subsidised activities” (Survey Respondent No. 17, private sector).

In this context, Morris (2008:1218) argued that ‘As a set of ideologies, discourses, and policy strategies, neoliberalism promotes commodifying natural resources and altering the form and the substance of environmental governance to rely more on market-based strategies and non-state actors.’ For this market to evolve, however, it is fundamental that individual property rights exist for the environmental resources to be ‘traded’. These rights are either designed, or ‘their spontaneous creation is not blocked by a regulation’ (Slavikova *et al.*, 2010:2). If the goods that this market creates are then demanded by consumers, then a value is created and it is in the interest to retain the high environmental quality of the resources. Thus:

'The mechanism of supply and demand can work in favour of environmental protection in the same way as it works for conventional goods and services. This implicates that if individuals in the society do not demand high quality of the environment, it is not (and it should not be) provided' (Slavikova *et al.*, 2010:2).

The above arguments support the findings from this study that a market-based approach can be successfully adopted to meet sustainability objectives. In the MTPN context, this study has seen actors such as Moor Trees develop environmental products and services that can be 'sold' through enterprise models (Ferguson, 2010). This approach, when successful, generates new income streams and removes the pressures of constantly competing for grants. Referred to by Liverman (2004) as the 'commodification of nature', it has also seen Moor Trees diversify into the world of corporate responsibility, where it increasingly works with private sector actors striving to increase their environmental and social credentials.

5.4 Connecting Environmental and Corporate Responsibility

5.4.1 The Corporate Sector and the Environment

Corporate Responsibility⁵¹ is a concept born out of organisations' need and desire to work beyond government regulations and minimum environmental standards to reduce negative environmental and other externalities. This is partly due to stakeholder pressure for them to improve their environmental, as well as social, performance. Corporate Responsibility has resulted in annual company reporting on social and environmental behaviour. They engage in voluntary environmental (and social) initiatives for a variety of reasons, including management's values, reputation management, and cost reduction (Waddock, 2004).

⁵¹ Findings suggest that Corporate Responsibility evolved from the original 'corporate social responsibility' due to the rise in profile of environmental sustainability which provides an additional focus to social considerations. Biodiversity, in particular, has not traditionally been a central focus of Corporate Responsibility, but this is changing due to increasing public and business awareness of the issue, notably since the publication of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in 2005.

Participants also strive to embed the concept in the organisation and its staff's day-to-day activities. It is frequently operationalised through environmental management systems, volunteering, philanthropy (usually through financial donations to charities or trusts) or in-kind contributions (MITIE plc, for example, donated a minibus to Moor Trees). Waddock (2004:9) explained this as involving 'the strategies and operating practices a company develops in operationalising its relationships with and impacts on stakeholders and the natural environment'. More recently, corporate responsibility has become synonymous with sustainable development, with sustainability objectives often embedded in companies' annual reports under a Corporate Responsibility section (many companies are now publishing separate Corporate Responsibility reports).

I played both researcher and practitioner roles whilst researching this concept. As a researcher, I collected 248 company annual reports over a 2 year period. I found that 94% of them included sections on their Corporate Responsibility activities, of which 78% contained details on meeting sustainability objectives. During this period, I also wrote Corporate Responsibility reports for four different organisations. The UK government's (2005) *Securing the Future - delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy* includes companies in their devolved responsibility for sustainable development approach:

'To see UK businesses taking account of their economic, social and environmental impacts, and acting to address the key sustainable development challenges based on their core competences wherever they operate – locally, regionally and internationally' (HM Government, 2005).

Thus, Corporate Responsibility can be argued to be based on Capriotti and Moreno's (2007:85) assertion that it is an 'organisation's commitments to fulfilling economic, social, and environmental duties. It also includes information transparency, ethical behaviour, company

management, product development, and the evaluation and control of the fulfilment of these commitments.’ Corporate Responsibility reporting needs to show tangible (and quantifiable) evidence of an active approach to the creation of social and environmental (as well as economic) capital, and operational transparency. The Business in the Community (BiTC - see www.bitc.org.uk) website stated that, in recognition of this shift towards socio-environmental reporting, 88% of FTSE100 companies published non-financial information in 2008. A popular way for this approach to be delivered is increasingly through partnership-working with third sector actors such as Moor Trees, whereby participants can invest directly or make an in-kind contribution to its third sector partner’s work.

This has led to the diversification of the MTPN to include a growing number of corporate actors. Examples of this cross-sector partnership-working include:

Company	Contribution	Value	Cash / IKC
1. Almanac Gallery	Woodland sponsorship	£9k	Cash
2. Fourfront Group	Woodland sponsorship	£4k	Cash
3. MITIE plc	Minibus	£18k	IKC
4. Toshiba plc	Website sponsorship	£4k	Cash
5. Spook Media	Website Software	£1.8k p.a.	IKC
6. Xperta	Website hosting	£0.5k p.a.	IKC

Table 5.4: Corporate Members⁵² of the MTPN

Source: Author (collated via Moor Trees Action Research)

These partnerships are complex, with funding and in-kind contributions generated for Moor Trees whilst the company can benefit from ‘Green PR’, market differentiation and brand association. An example of such a partnership is the one between Moor Trees and EDF Energy’s ‘Supporting Communities’ programme ‘Helping Hands’ initiative. I observed the partnership over a two year period, during which time Moor Trees hosted EDF staff volunteers who visited once per month with a group size averaging 22. This was quantified by Moor Trees

⁵² All data published in Moor Trees Annual Reports and is, therefore, in the public domain.

as equating to 1,056 volunteer hours, a statistic used by both partners in reporting. In addition, EDF staff benefits included development and training and 'green PR'. However, EDF's Head of Corporate Responsibility suggested a more altruistic approach:

"Through our volunteering programme, Helping Hands, we give every EDF Energy employee two paid days, twice the UK government recommended entitlement, to get involved in community-based activities. Some work with local charities or social groups; others donate their energy and expertise to good causes."

The Moor Trees / EDF partnership provides a good example of a collaborative approach by private and third sector actors in the delivery of an environmental programme, in this case tree growing and planting for woodland conservation. To re-contextualise, it is worth considering how the outputs of the project meet state-formulated sustainable development aims and objectives i.e. the Dartmoor Local Biodiversity Action Plan. It could be argued that EDF is seeking green PR and that Moor Trees is seeking additional resources, but the numbers of trees planted also contribute to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives, i.e. to create 75 hectares of new native woodland over 10 years. Thus, the EDF case study provides an example of the bottom-up approach of devolved responsibility delivered through cross-sector partnership-working. Had this partnership not been formed then the outputs would not have been produced. However, these types of environmental partnerships need to be managed carefully to reduce greenwash whilst maximising return on investment for the corporation to help build a lasting and rewarding relationship for both partners.

5.4.2 Greenwash and Altruism

Findings suggested that there is an increasing responsibility for environmental awareness and sustainable business practice placed on the private sector by the public and third sectors.

However, third / private sector partnerships including MTPN actors such as EDF, MITIE and Toshiba often provoke cynical comments from some observers also suggesting that these environmental partnerships are based more on 'greenwash' than a genuinely altruistic approach to the environment. A mixture of greenwash and altruism was indeed observed within the MTPN. This ranged from, on the one hand, public relations companies contacting Moor Trees seeking 'quick win' news stories for their clients, to corporate actors genuinely seeking investment opportunities, occasionally on condition of anonymity. One (third sector) interviewee suggested that:

"The corporate sector offers a great opportunity for funding sustainability projects but you need to be careful that your members and other environmental partners don't think you're getting involved in greenwash. However, managed correctly, it can build financial sustainability and scale (increase) operation" (Interviewee No. 11).

Interviewee No. 10 (QUANGO) commented:

"Charities and companies working together is great, but it is important that the partnership also inspires meaningful and lasting change from within (the donor) as opposed to being just a short-term, PR-driven fix".

The difficulty of avoiding or 'managing' greenwash was further discussed by a Moor Trees member of staff:

"I think it's really difficult to work with corporate partners and avoid accusations of greenwash from existing partners, even if it isn't really happening. We need to really weigh-up the benefits against the potential threats of disenfranchised members" (Interview No. 12).

Further, another private sector interviewee (working in public relations), commented:

“Charity work is rising in profile, especially environmental work. One of the challenges of this arrangement, however, is to ensure that the corporate partner communication strategy accurately reflects the investment made. For example, ‘XYZ plc’ plants a woodland’, could mean a 1 hectare or a 10 hectare site. So Moor Trees would need to stipulate quantification of woodland planting i.e. ‘XYZ plc plants a 2 hectare woodland’” (Interview No. 16).

Engaging the private sector in effective (environmental) partnership-working is, therefore, considered a challenge, though one that can also yield significant benefit. Non-state actors engaged in sustainability initiatives are not exclusively third sector, but increasingly a third / private sector mix. However, whilst the challenge of encouraging behavioural and attitudinal change in the private sector partner is often led by the third sector partner, it is still strategically driven by the top-down, state approach of environmental policy objectives. Take for example, the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment directive, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan. These are all state-formulated policies that are being delivered by non-state actors, often in partnership with the private sector. Without doubt, the lower levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum includes the actors engaged in the bottom-up approach, but this study suggests that the state is becoming over-dependent on the market-based approach of third / private sector partnerships to leverage new (non-state) funding and resources to help operationalise EPPP. Indeed, findings suggest that these new collaborations are becoming increasingly important for EPPP delivery. Janker and Nijhof (2006) also argue that a mutual understanding of expectations between partners (i.e. brand association by the private sector actor vs. environmental benefit of the partnership) is required to bring success. Castree and Sparke (2000, in Liverman, 2004), however, are more sceptical, contending that corporate involvement is co-optation, with no serious commitment

to the environment (see also Logan and Wekerle, 2008). A private sector Survey Respondent (No. 17) also commented that the cost of 'real' environmentalism can lead to reduced (as opposed to increased) competitiveness:

"It is difficult to explain rising costs to clients who purchased a service at a price some time ago. In order to continue to provide an environmentally-sound service, we must increase our costs which can then put us out of the market as we are undercut by those less strict / less environmentally / corporate responsibility aware companies."

Costs are indeed an issue, especially regarding the independent validation and reporting that Bishop *et al.* (2008) noted are increasingly required of companies to measure their environmental performance, even when operating over and above statutory requirements. This validation and reporting has evolved in recent years, with a range of social and environmental standards, guidelines, assessment tools and / or reporting systems being developed for various industries. Examples include:

- ISO 14001, an environmental management standard developed by the International Organisation for Standardisation.
- Equator Principles, which set a benchmark for the financial industry to manage social and environmental risk in project financing.
- Global Reporting Initiative, which provides a framework for organisational reports on economic, environmental and social performance.
- Performance Standard 6 on Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management developed by the International Finance Corporation for all projects it finances
- ISO 26000 voluntary guidelines for social responsibility

(Bishop *et al.*, 2008:114)

As well as providing a more robust monitoring and review framework, these standards can introduce cost-saving measures such as energy efficiency in to businesses. They can also produce less tangible benefits such as employee morale, which Moor Trees linked with environmental volunteering programmes such as its EDF partnership, thus providing quantifiable outputs, such as hours volunteered and trees planted. None of these standards are state-driven, though many work in parallel with state policies and are managed by third sector actors. This demonstrates how the markets are adopting new accountability regimes to meet sustainable development objectives and, in turn, deliver state-formulated EPPP.

5.5 Conclusion

Analysis has revealed the consistent theme of the challenge of putting state-formulated sustainable development policies into practice through the non-state delivery framework of effective partnership-working. Although the state conceptually and strategically embraces devolved responsibility through engaging levels 3 and 4 of the Policy Implementation Continuum as a delivery mechanism for sustainable development initiatives, non-state actors regularly argue for increased resources to be made available. It was also suggested that state sustainability objectives will for the most part stay as rhetoric unless they are backed-up by additional resources to enable grassroots actors to accept responsibility for delivery. Data suggested that the success of devolved responsibility for sustainable development lies in the willingness of the state to increase funding to community-based actors. It also raised the question of the implied heterarchical approach of devolved responsibility, whereby each actor within the MTPN shares a horizontal position of power and authority, thus theoretically playing an equal role in the delivery of sustainable development. This is a sound concept, but MTPN actor feedback suggested that the state retained control through a (hierarchical) managerial framework (this is explored in Section 7.3). The audit culture of government

funding that is made available certainly suggests this, though it is acknowledged that the use of tax-payers money will, by nature, restrict programme flexibility and dynamism.

Is it possible, therefore, for the government to make available the additional resources requested by the third sector? This is a question in part answered by the rise of third / private sector partnerships as sustainable development delivery vehicles due to their less accountable and more dynamic nature. The devolution of responsibility is interpreted by some as the government's attempts to withdraw support from the environmental sector by devolving responsibility for environmental governance to the local level whilst still seeking to govern from a distance. Analysis has shown that the state appears to be devolving responsibility for the environmental sustainability to non-state actors by increasingly seeking to 'govern through communities' through 'community, diversity and locality' (Murdoch, 1997:109). The environmental governance concept includes the state replacing direct intervention with discourses of community responsibility and self-governing through partnership-working (Thompson, 2005:326). The integration and occasionally exclusive use of non-state actors in the formulation and delivery of EPPP is conceptually sound, but raises issues about their lack of democratic legitimacy leading to reduced uptake by wider stakeholders (Boonstra, 2006; Bulkeley, 2005; Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Dryzek, 2001; Mackinnon, 2000). In seeking to further analyse the partnership approach to environmental governance, the following chapter examines if and how such partnerships can obtain democratic legitimacy when delivered by non-state, unelected actors.

Chapter 6: The Legitimacy of Cross-sector Partnerships as a Formulation and Delivery Framework for Environmental Plans, Policies and Programmes

6.1 Introduction

The shift from government to governance has led to a shift from state domination of policy development and delivery to collaborations with non-state actors in flexible and often less-formalised structures (Papadopoulus, 2003; Stoker, 1997 in Connelly *et al.*, 2006). These collaborations are considered key for democratic legitimacy by Dryzek (2001:651), who argued that (as an absolute ideal) legitimacy is gained 'through reflective assent through participation in authentic deliberation by all those subject to the decision in question'. Whilst democratic legitimacy is considered an important component of a governance approach (Wallington *et al.*, 2008), this research asked the question: *do EPPP lose legitimacy through the inclusion of non-state actors that have not been empowered through a process of representative democracy?* This chapter seeks to answer this question by addressing the concept of the legitimacy of cross-sector partnerships as a formulation and delivery framework for predominantly state-derived EPPP. To do this, the chapter drew on action research and observations, online survey responses, and in-depth interviews with state and non-state actors.

The chapter firstly analyses the MTPN to identify the informal partnerships that have developed in response to state-formulated EPPP. It addresses the issue of the selective representation of environmental partnerships, using the case study of a QUANGO funding programme. It then analyses how state partnerships seek legitimacy through public participation in EPPP formulation and community involvement in delivery. The chapter

concludes by discussing if a formal framework is necessary and if so, how it may be adopted to ensure EPPP legitimacy.

6.2 Deconstructing the MTPN: an Analysis of Environmental Partnerships' Legitimacy when Co-ordinated and Managed by Non-State Actors

The MTPN consisted of a wide range of state and non-state actors covering all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum i.e. public, QUANGO, third and private sectors. Initial findings gained through environmental sector observation and participation suggested that, for the most part, the non-state partners (which form 73% of the MTPN) primarily operated in the area of programme delivery, as opposed to PPP formulation. As such, this research explored if this is due to (i) 'delivery' being intrinsically more resource-intensive⁵³ than 'formulation', or (ii) because formulation can involve a smaller, often exclusive set of (primarily state) actors, which tend to exclude many of those directly engaged in the subsequent delivery.

Findings suggested the latter, and thus raised questions regarding the democratic legitimacy of environmental partnerships due to a lack of stakeholder representation, i.e. Dryzek's engagement of 'all those subject to the decision in question'. Further, Bulkeley *et al.*'s (2005:879) conceptualised 'redistribution of state functions' could also suggest that the state's deliberative democracy (based on stakeholder consultation) compromise (between direct and representative democracy) of non-state actor participation is itself flawed for the same reason.

To answer these questions, MTPN actors were categorised and stratified in an attempt to quantify the democratic legitimacy of associated EPPP. The data was collated through the researcher's participation in and observation of the MTPN.

⁵³ Programme delivery often involves more time, money and people.

6.2.1 The MTPN and the Policy Implementation Continuum

For the sake of this study, the MTPN was quantified as 272 actors⁵⁴, of which 73 (27%) were classed as 'state' and 199 (73%) as 'non-state'.

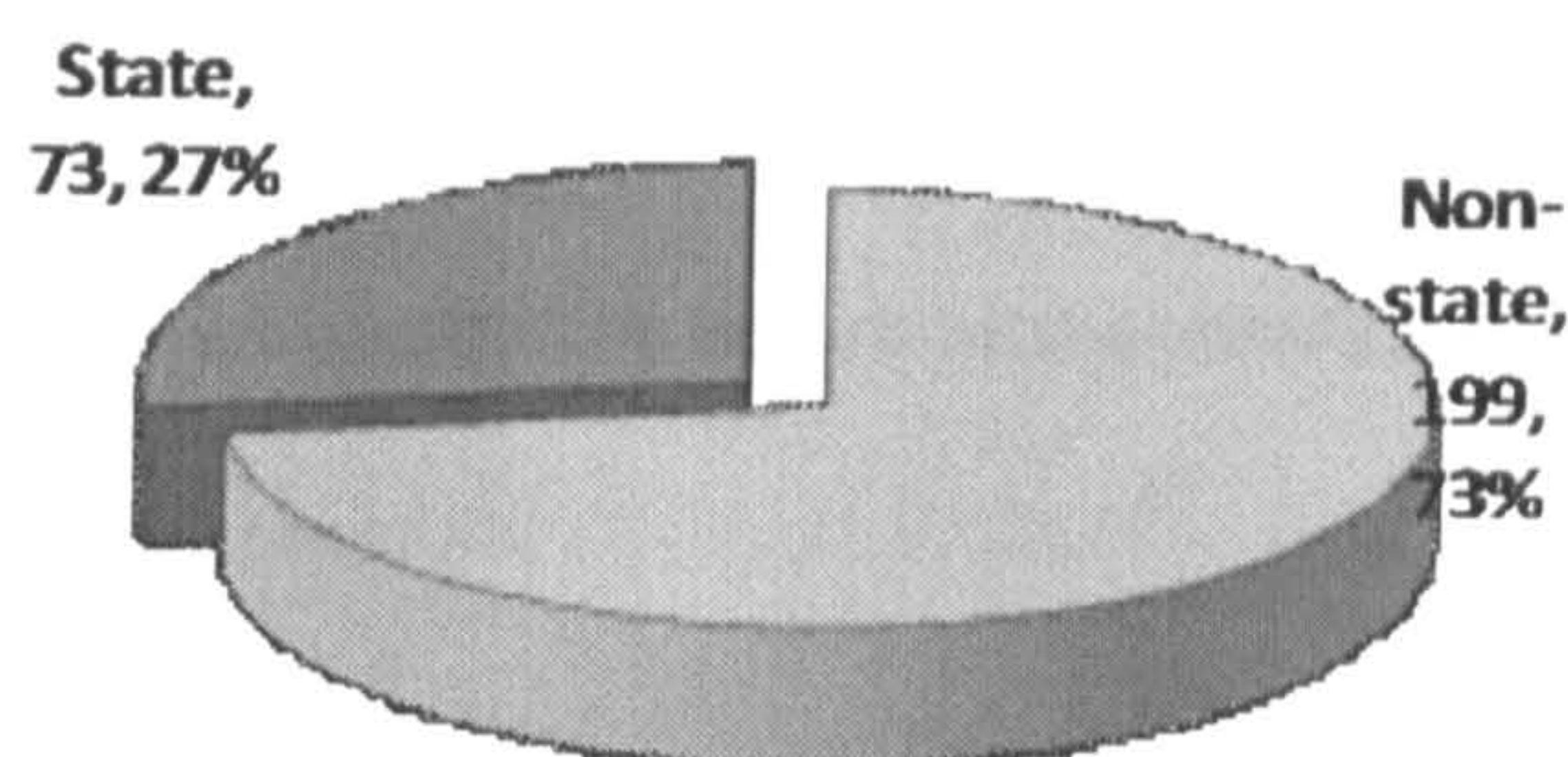


Figure 6.1: MTPN State / Non-State Classification

Source: Author

	State		Non-state	
	1. Government	2. QUANGO	3. third	4. Private
	38 (14%)	35 (13%)	110 (40%)	89 (33%)
EPPP Formulation	38 (100%)	35 (100%)	38 (35%)	33 (37%)
EPPP Delivery	38 (100%)	35 (100%)	98 (91%)	89 (100%)

Table 6.1: MTPN EPPP Formulation and Delivery Cluster

Source: Author

Analysis of the above table shows 100% of state actors are involved in EPPP formulation - this means directly involved in the consultation process i.e. member of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan stakeholder group. 100% are also involved in delivery i.e. habitat management and creation, biodiversity audits, or education provision. However, whereas 93.5% of non-state actors were active in delivery, only 35.5% were involved in formulation, a significant bias towards state actors in EPPP formulation. This statistic suggests, therefore, that EPPP lack

⁵⁴ The larger survey sampling frame of 400 included a number of actors who worked for the same organisations, though at different levels and departments.

democratic legitimacy due to limited stakeholder engagement. Further survey responses and interview data also suggested that partnerships can suffer from selective representation.

Goodwin (1998:11) concurred:

‘Political talk and writing now stress notions of inclusion and empowerment, but given the paternalistic and ‘non-political’ traditions dominant in many rural areas, there may be a tendency to involve only key actors in the new structures of governance and marginalise the wider community’.

Survey Respondent No. 16 (from the private sector), supported this assertion:

“Partnerships must have active consultative methodologies with all local stakeholders in place to be sure to meet local / regional need. ‘Listening to the people’ has a key role. Public scepticism about government strategies is borne out of poor consultation and the same faces cropping up time and again when it comes to making decisions”.

6.2.2 Of Selective Representation: Membership Selection and Inclusion / Exclusion Criteria

My experiences of working on the various funding committees to which I had been invited and wider observations at stakeholder forums suggested that many environmental partnerships were frequently ‘self-selecting’ or subject to selective representation. This suggested that environmental partnership founders invited specific actors to join the partnership, thus reducing representativeness and possibly resulting in bias regarding the disbursement of funding. When asked to comment on the statement *Environmental Partnerships tend to self-select their members*, 69% of respondents agreed and 25% had no opinion. Only 6% disagreed, indicating that environmental partnerships can be self-selecting.

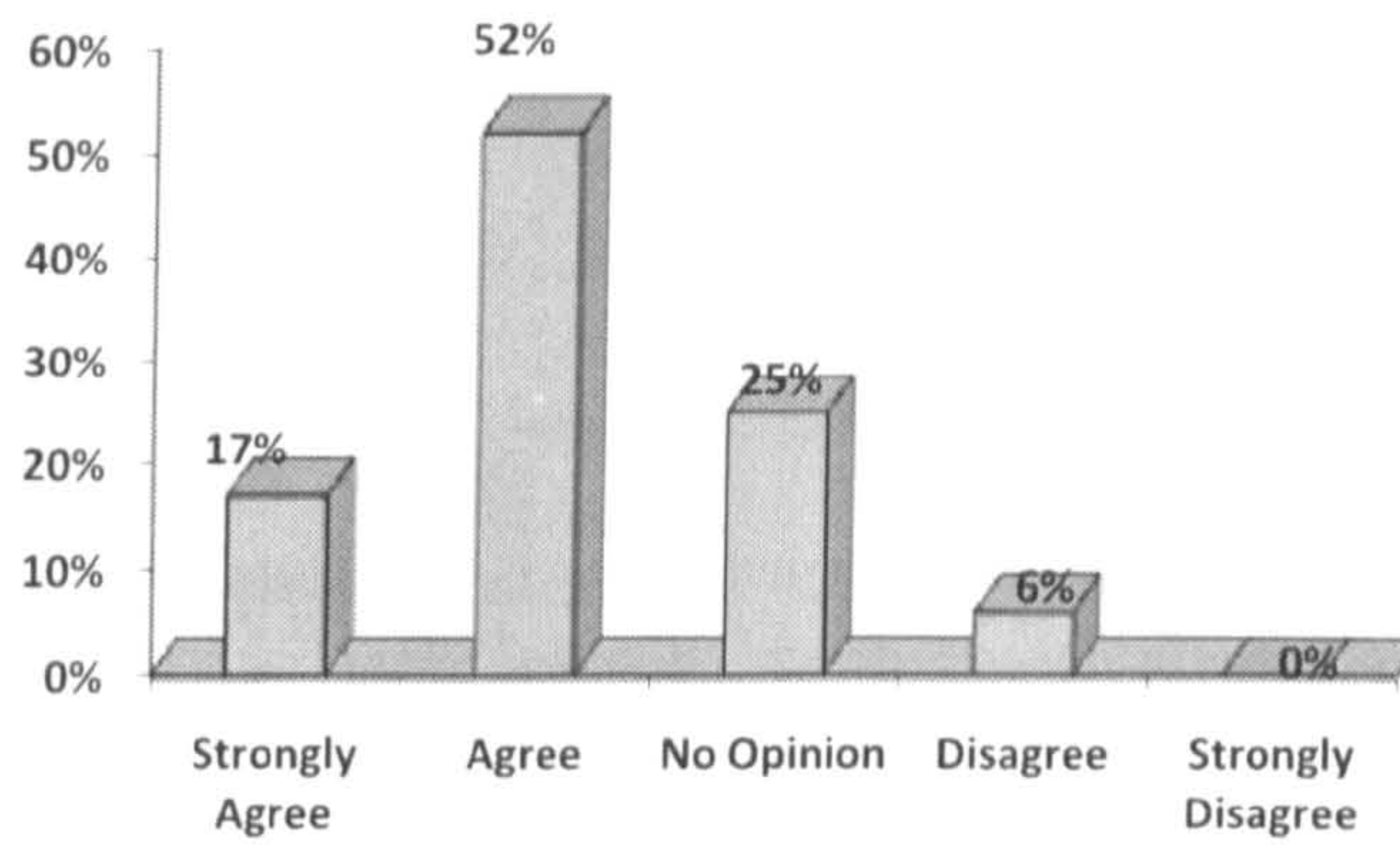


Figure 6.2: 'Environmental Partnerships tend to self-select their members'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

Further evidence of self-selection was noted from private sector Survey Respondent No. 71, who commented that "There is an inherent danger that environmental partnership membership becomes self-perpetuating". The respondent also commented on how certain actors always appear to be members of partnerships. I explored this point with co-practitioners and at interview. It was generally agreed that national partnerships need some actors included that have national coverage, i.e. BTCV, Groundwork, RSPB, National Trust, Woodland Trust, etc. However, the need for local representation (i.e. Moor Trees) was also important for local context, and not necessarily from 'local offices' of national organisations as they would still be guided by 'head office' aims and objectives. It was also suggested that national actors involved in 'local projects' would inevitably divert some funding to their head office to cover 'core costs'. I also explored this point with a number of organisations, and found that it was their policy to budget for between 10% and 25% of project funding to go to head office.

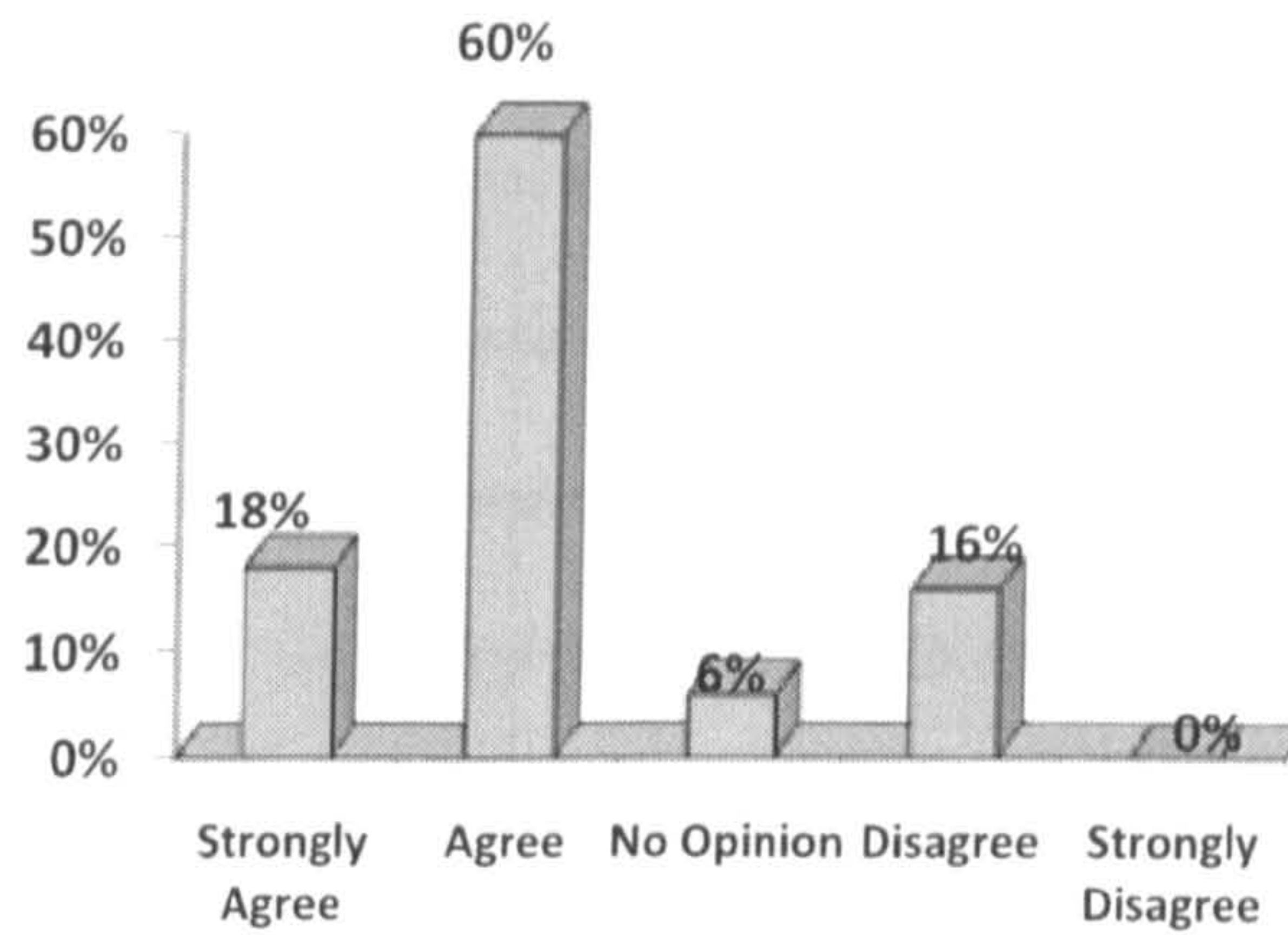


Figure 6.3: 'They can be dominated by one or a few organisations'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

Survey Respondent No. 28 (from the public sector) also suggested that "Proper community engagement is difficult and the partnerships set up often involve only those who have an interest and are not truly representative of the wider community". Both actors, therefore, supported the notion that partnerships can be unrepresentative. The idea of self-perpetuation of membership was reinforced, with 78% of survey respondents agreeing that partnerships can be dominated by one or a few organisations (see Figure 6.3). Of the 16% that disagreed, 90% were state actors, suggesting a degree of respondent subjectivity. On exploring this point further, it was pointed out by third sector Interviewee (No. 14) that "The main barrier to wider involvement is a perception that partnerships are closed shops when most partnerships would welcome wider involvement". This perhaps suggests an attitudinal barrier as opposed to an organisational one. One (public sector) survey respondent (No. 2) commented that "Self selection may seem to happen, but I believe that this is not the case. Many people are apathetic to joining partnerships and I believe that it is often the same interested parties that contribute the lion's share". In contrast, Survey Respondent No. 74 (from the third sector) stated that "As long as there is widespread consultation, and the consultation indicates a fairly strong consensus, then self-selection ("who do we need") works". Responses, therefore, showed differing opinions about self-selection.

In addition to survey responses and interviews, a programme within the MTPN provided an interesting indication of selective inclusivity. The programme in question was Natural England's⁵⁵ 'Access to Nature' Programme (A2N), which was promoted as a partnership to enable *people from all backgrounds to understand, access and enjoy our natural environment*. Evidence collected, however, suggested that the immediate beneficiaries consisted of partnership members⁵⁶ and / or public sector⁵⁷ actors. The programme was a Big Lottery Fund grant programme that was managed by Natural England (a QUANGO). It targeted environmental volunteering and was theoretically open to all environmental sector actors active in that area. As Director of Moor Trees, I applied to the fund in 2008. As part of the funding application process, I researched the background to the programme, including management structure. I discovered that membership of the management committee and funding panel was by invitation only and that no sector-wide consultation had been carried out prior to its launch to request expressions of interest in joining the committee. The Moor Trees application was rejected, and I subsequently explored the intricacies of the programme further. I discovered that the majority of the funding (65%) had been awarded to committee members (42.5%) and public sector actors (22.5%). Further interviews suggested that this example is not isolated, with some suggesting that it is prevalent in the environmental sector. One third sector actor commented:

"In my experience of over 30 years of community and environmental projects, partnerships are usually led by a dominant organisation that commands most of the budget and influence over the project. Larger NGOs...can act almost as QUANGOs working closely with government departments. I have experience where...panel member 'partners' were able to command most of the funds".

⁵⁵ Written permission for inclusion in this study was received.

⁵⁶ British Waterways, BTCV, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, GreenSpace, Groundwork UK, Land Restoration Trust, The National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, The Woodland Trust (this data is in the public domain).

⁵⁷ The awarding of significant grants to public sector applicants i.e. City Councils and National Parks, contrasts with Jessop's concept of the 'hollowing out of the state' and Tony Blair's 'active citizenship' discourse.

Another (public sector) commented during interview that this was “typical of ‘x’ (government) organisation, they always work with the same Voluntary Community sector partners”.

Findings suggest, therefore, that whilst state-driven environmental partnerships are ‘inclusive and representative’ in theory, they can be ‘self-selecting’ in practice. However, the key element in raising legitimacy is the inclusion of all groups and individuals affected by EPPPs, both in terms of who is present and how they are involved (Connelly *et al.*, 2006). Despite state actors such as Defra (2003) mentioning inclusivity in their rural community capacity building programme, the issue remains as to whether EPPPs can ever be fully inclusive, or whether stakeholder groups are merely selected by the state to include those actors with whom an existing ‘smooth’ relationship⁵⁸ exists, at the expense of other stakeholders. Castree (2009) and Evans (2004), amongst others, argued that this path dependency may result from pre-existing arrangements and power relations that may also restrict the transformative ability of environmental partnerships. Various MTPN actors agreed, particularly with the point about ‘pre-existing arrangements’ and ‘local knowledge’, or as Evans (2004:278) conceptualised it, ‘local embeddedness’. Connelly *et al.* (2006), in their study of ‘new rural governance’ argued that legitimacy is grounded in stakeholder deliberation. It could be argued that this is also consistent with the environmental sector and that it is indeed problematic that the criteria of legitimacy appropriate to representative democratic government is not obviously applicable due to it being *situated*, or, specifically contextualised or localised. This means that stakeholder representation from the locality of each project should be sought.

Despite Dryzek’s (2001) argument regarding reflective assent, it would be unreasonable to suggest that *all* stakeholders could ever be truly engaged due to inevitable logistical and economic constraints and challenges. There does, however, appear to be failings in the levels of representativeness that arguably can be achieved. As Stoker (2006:53) pointed out ‘...what

⁵⁸ Referred to by Connelly *et al.* (2006:274) as enabling creative exploration of new positions free from scrutiny or political ‘interference’.

is required is the construction of a dialogue that allows space for the involvement of the disorganised many as well as the organised few.' So, perhaps it is an improved communications and feedback framework that is required to close the gap between the rhetoric and practice of 'local' environmental governance (Evans, 2004). Indeed, if this was to be implemented then the voice(s) of the 'disorganised' would then perhaps also be heard.

6.3 Seeking the Legitimation of Environmental Partnerships in the Absence of the Legitimacy Mechanisms of Representative Democracy

The selective inclusivity and lack of representativeness appearing to impact on the legitimacy of environmental partnerships suggests that an alternative legitimacy mechanism should be considered to enable EPPPs to receive Dryzek's *reflective assent*. With an improved communication and feedback framework as an alternative to representative democracy highlighted by existing literature and MTPN actors alike, the concept was explored further.

6.3.1 Representation in PPP formulation: 'Giving Everyone a Say' – Securing Legitimacy through Representative Public Participation?

Many standards of good governance originate from traditional principles of democracy. Although many aspects of environmental governance take place outside parliament, and hence remote from the institutional core of democracy, governance discourse still includes; the involvement of all people or groups concerned; the equality of influence; the responsiveness of governance institutions to citizen needs and concerns; and the accountability of decision-makers and administrative bodies (Steffek, 2009). Findings revealed, however, a number of cases within the MTPN (and the wider environmental sector) whereby the governance approach of stakeholder engagement had evolved towards state-originated 'managerialist' arrangements by an increasingly exclusive group of actors. Described by

Skelcher (2000) as a 'closed decision-making core', this approach was also acknowledged by a number of actors during the survey and interviews. One third sector Survey Respondent (No. 14) commented that "decisions are often made with only token consultation", whilst another (public sector) actor's comment⁵⁹ also raised the issue of funding:

"It is always the same large organisations that seem to be running these projects these days. They allude to working with everybody to get the funding but then when it is awarded nobody benefits but themselves and the outputs are never as high as they would be if they did actually work with smaller community groups".

Such comments above reinforce the notion of environmental partnerships' exclusivity and lack of representativeness. However, Survey Respondent No. 33 (a QUANGO), argued that "There always has to be one leading body, normally that with the highest percentage of funding resources, so although suggestions can be made, the final say has to lie with one body". My observations concluded that this comment is atypical of QUANGO representativeness due to their traditional position of power as funder and within the Policy Implementation Continuum. Although it is this hierarchical approach that the governance concept seeks to replace through partnership-working with non-state actors (an essential component of sustainability discourse, argued Evans *et al.* (2006)), the challenge appears to lie in the legitimisation of non-representative state-formulated EPPP for the delivery of projects at the local level (Gibbs and Jonas, 2000).

Representation is argued to be the key for the legitimacy of environmental partnerships. But it is unclear if this can occur through direct engagement in the formulation and delivery of EPPP. Theoretically, but operationalising this is problematic and complex, with the number and diversity of stakeholders required to play a role if environmental partnerships are to claim

⁵⁹ This was not a formal interview, but authority was granted to use the comment in this study.

legitimacy through representation. Findings suggest a compromise between membership and active communications and feedback is required i.e. 'giving everyone a say'. 'Public participation' lies within Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration, with 'The right to participate in decision making processes - the right to be consulted and participate in proposals, plans or activities'. It is also one of the three pillars of the 1998 Aarhus Convention. In 1998, the government also argued that enhanced public participation can contribute to the development of 'a new brand of involved and responsible local citizenship' (DETR, 1998, in Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). Whilst public participation clearly underpins a democratic process, it also gives stakeholders the opportunity to influence the design, or formulation of EPPP. 88% of MTPN actors agreed with the survey statement that environmental partnerships *increase the influence of your organisation*.

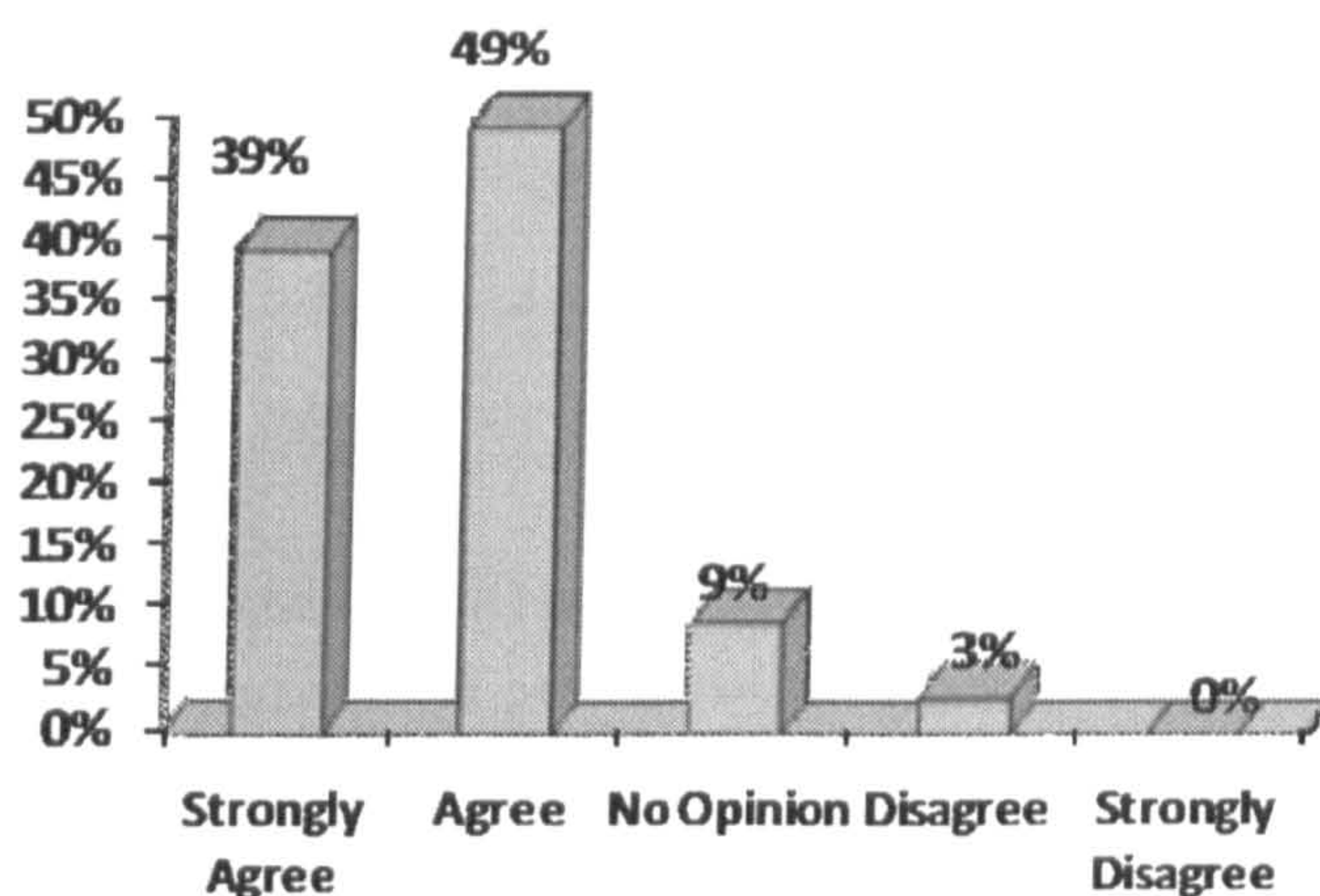


Figure 6.4: 'They increase the influence of your organisation'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

Public participation is considered to be one of the benefits of partnership-working, but it is argued by Yarwood (2002) and Lowndes and Sullivan (2004) that it can also be problematic.

Survey Respondent No. 30 (a QUANGO) commented that:

"...it can be difficult to engage public, private and voluntary and community sector groups tend to have one or two sectors, but not all. It can also be very difficult for

campaigning NGOs to leave their core issues at the door and engage in true partnerships where there is compromise / meet in the middle”.

Survey Respondent No. 5 (from the public sector) also pointed out that “Meetings often trundle on wasting officers’ time”, whilst Survey Respondent No. 29 (private sector) commented that “...as sometimes a lead individual can 'overrule' the views of partners, pursuing a course of action that not everybody agrees with”⁶⁰, thus suggesting that a democratic outcome was not always the case. Both are interesting points and show mixed feedback from online survey respondents when asked to comment on the statement ‘All partners receive a fair opportunity to contribute to decision-making’.

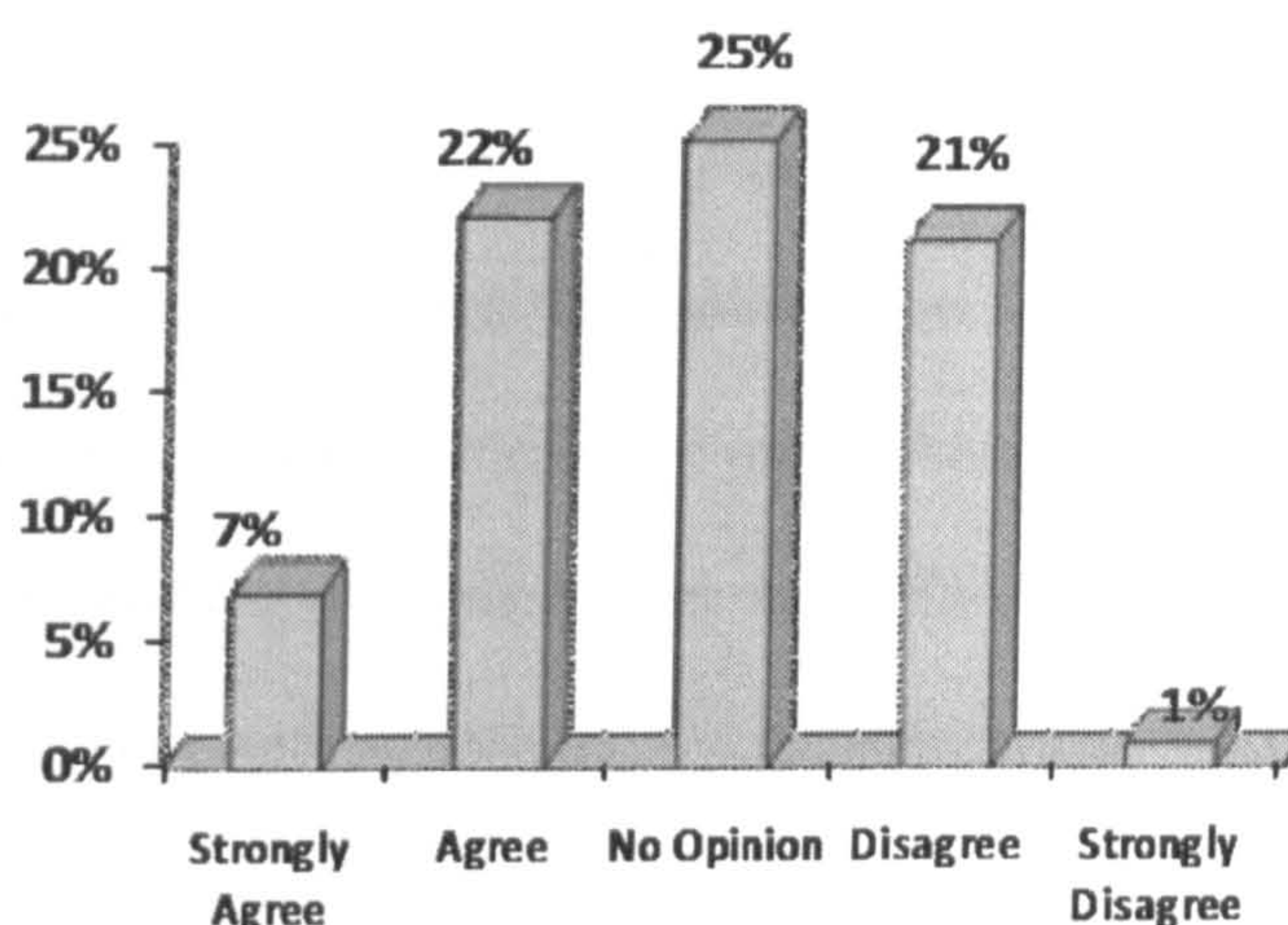


Figure 6.5: ‘All partners receive a fair opportunity to contribute to decision-making’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

Democratic debate is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development, but the above data suggests that the concept of effective partnership-working can be difficult to put into practice. Ferretti (2006) suggested that broadening participation enhances democratic legitimacy as an expression of self-governance and makes people more motivated to accept outcomes. Lowndes and Sullivan (2004:51), however, contended that environmental partnerships do not

⁶⁰ Kellett (2007) argued that (in the context of renewables) a strong lead agency is a prime requirement, a second key component needs to be a high degree of community involvement, thus suggesting that compromise is key.

in themselves deliver enhanced public participation and that they may be *particularly difficult to secure citizen involvement in a partnership context*, and that public participation needs to be 'designed-in', not 'assumed-in'. On exploring community representation in PPP formulation at interview, third sector Interviewee (No. 8) stated that "This can be an area of weakness in partnerships. It is often talked about but seldom delivered fully".

Findings suggested that there is a challenge in achieving public participation in the formulation of EPPP. Action research experiences and MTPN actor feedback suggested two main limiting factors. One was the inability of some third sector organisations to afford the time to attend EPPP meetings. Survey Respondent No. 60 (from the third sector) supported this assertion "We do not have the time to work with fully paid government organisations". The other is the lack of (and, therefore, need for) an effective communication and feedback mechanism to enable contribution without attendance. To overcome this, Lowndes and Sullivan (2004:63) argued that innovative strategies are required to involve the 'external' public in policy consultation and deliberation, including a clear link between participation initiatives and decision-making processes, and 'a capacity for evaluation and for feedback to citizens regarding the outcome of participation exercises. I suggest that such a mechanism is possible thanks to the speed and costs-effectiveness of the digital age'⁶¹ (95% of MTPN actors used the internet for communication on a daily basis), which offers the opportunity for a digital communications framework to provide 'stakeholder participation and empowerment of the otherwise powerless but indispensable participants' (Mushove and Vogel, 2004:186). The internet is argued by Warren (2007:374) to benefit its users in a number of ways, including basic acquisition of information, the online purchase of goods and services, and, in this context, as a tool to interact with others 'in the wider processes of governance' through the removal of former barriers (particularly that of distance) to such interaction. Further, the

⁶¹ The role that information may and will play in environmental management and governance is changing dramatically, largely because of technology innovations that are transforming political relationships, scientific capabilities, patterns of governance, and policy strategies (Fiorino, 2009).

internet provides a 'clear and common identity that is recognisable to sceptical, or uninterested, local citizens' (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004:63). An example of such a mechanism is this study's online survey, which received a 77% response rate having been hosted online. Knowing how busy and geographically dispersed many of the respondents were, the high response rate was partly due to the ease of online access instead of my needing to conduct a visit in person.

The opportunity is theoretically there to improve participation in formulation through, for example, the use of the internet. However, despite *public participation in EPPP formulation preceding community involvement in EPPP delivery*, researcher experiences suggest that the latter is more prevalent in environmental partnerships i.e. that the state is more actively engaged in working with non-state actors in the delivery of environmental programmes, as opposed to their formulation. Thus, findings suggest that the governance approach could be state-derived sustainability rhetoric, as opposed to a genuine attempt to engage the citizen for the sake of improved uptake⁶² of EPPP. The next section explores this suggestion.

6.3.2 Community Involvement – Rhetoric or Reality? An Analysis of Theory vs. Practice

The UK Government started to promote EPPP community involvement via the Countryside Commission's Community Action Experimental Programme of the 1980s, when it placed greater emphasis on empowering 'local people to determine the sorts of environmental activities which took place in their communities' (Martin, 1995:150). More recently, the HM Treasury (2002) White Paper ('The Role of the Voluntary and Community sector in Service Delivery') highlighted the need for community involvement to build community capacity for the design, delivery and monitoring of services. Similarly, the government's 2005 Sustainable

⁶² One of the most insistent claims of supporters of deliberative democracy (or at least of some accounts of it) is that public participation leads to better policy outcomes not because it improves the substance of decision-making, but rather because it makes people more motivated to accept those outcomes, or at least to attenuate dissent (Ferretti, 2006).

Development Strategy and Community Action 2020 'Together We Can' programmes included 'Community involvement' as a key component of its integrated approach for creating sustainable communities and a fairer world (HM Government, 2005). Although the state has promoted this inclusive approach as a component of sustainable development, this study explored both rhetoric and reality by analysing if community involvement did inspire active citizenship, or if this stakeholder engagement was merely for the creation of political capital with public sector actors retaining top-down control.

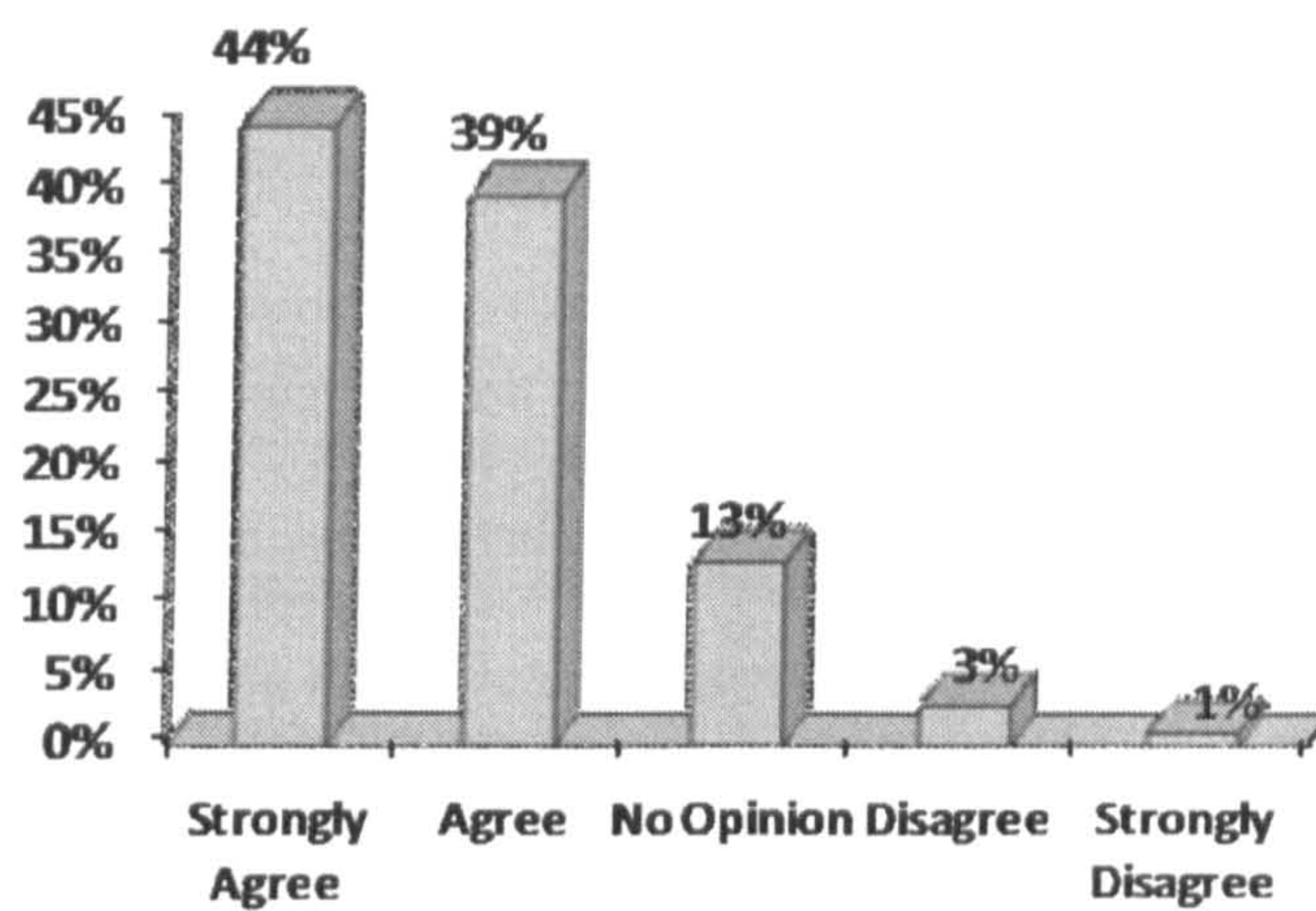


Figure 6.6: 'Environmental partnerships usually include Public Sector partners'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

The survey showed that 83% of respondents expected there to be a public sector partner in an environmental partnership, suggesting that the partnerships are rarely exclusively made up of non-state actors. However, only 36% of respondents agreed that partnerships should include local community partners. These data begin to suggest that, in practice, the partnerships are primarily state-driven. On exploring this further, it became evident that all but one respondent was a public sector actor.

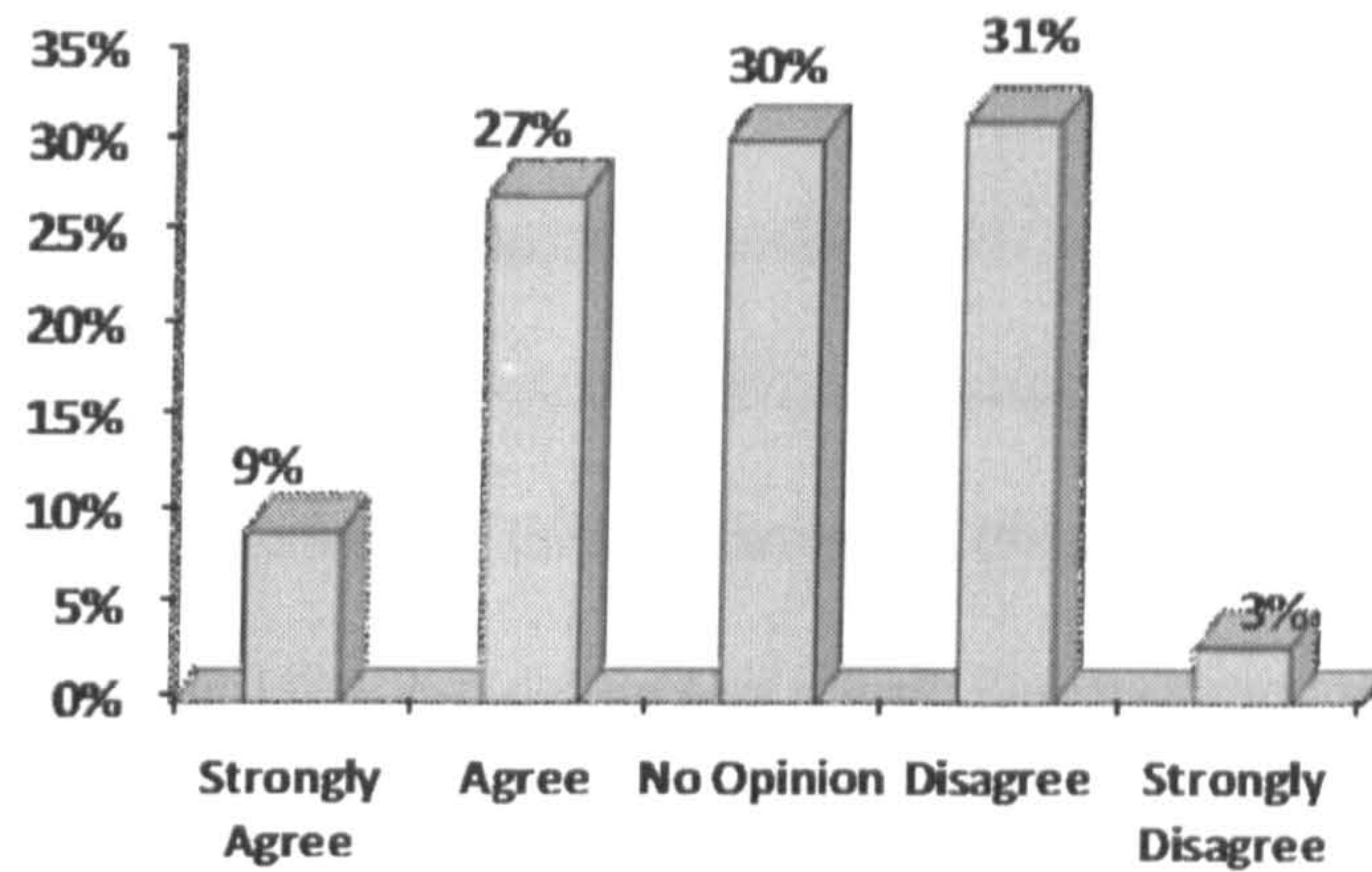


Figure 6.7: 'Environmental partnerships should include local community partners'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

Researcher experiences through action research also led to the conclusion that most environmental partnerships included (and were often driven by) state actors (see also 6.2.2). This raised questions regarding the devolution of responsibility to the non-state level. It also suggested that partnership legitimacy is actually implied via the inclusion of state actors as opposed to that of non-state actors. However, it was not clear whether this framework was for legitimacy purposes, or if it was more due to the operational challenges of effective partnership-working. Indeed, some survey respondents doubted the practicalities of non-state / local community partner inclusion:

"Many environmental partnerships work hard to include local community partners, but few of them are able to consistently empower community partners to stay involved in an environmental partnership over the long-term and to regularly contribute to decisions" (Survey Respondent No. 37, QUANGO).

“I cannot think of an environmental partnership that demonstrates good practice by genuinely involving a range of community partners in all aspects of policy or project delivery” (Survey Respondent No. 39 (third sector)).

“Sometimes difficult to actively involve partners in the project delivery, quite happy to attend meetings but leave the delivery to a few” (Survey Respondent No. 28, public sector).

Interview feedback from, and action research within, the MTPN suggests that non-state actors find effective partnership-working a challenge unless they are directly funded to do so (which is rarely the case). Thus, this study suggests that, although community involvement is *theoretically* a pre-requisite of effective partnership-working, *in practice*, it is a challenge to deliver and also necessitates the inclusion of state actors to build EPPP legitimacy. Raco and Imrie (2000:2196) conceptualised this rescaling of policy production and implementation as ‘active citizenship’, where ‘self-governing capacities are mobilised so that governance is conducted in and through the governed’. However, findings suggested that the degree to which non-state environmental partnerships ‘self-govern’ is unclear due to frequent state inclusion.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the inclusivity, representativeness and democratic legitimacy of effective partnership-working through the empirical focus of the MTPN. It concluded that environmental partnerships theoretically dovetail with a deliberative (or ‘discursive’) democracy approach through their community involvement. It also highlighted environmental partnerships as expressions of self-governance through the greater involvement of citizens and participation in different areas of life within the community (Ferretti, 2006). Environmental

partnerships are, therefore, seen to potentially contribute to the democratic *legitimacy* of EPPP, but only if increased levels of engagement are secured i.e. stakeholders are awarded the *opportunity* to participate in decisions that affect them. Boonstra (2006) and Connelly *et al.* (2006) concurred that it is the conceptual underpinning of environmental governance that EPPPs are shaped through these collaborative stakeholder processes to secure this legitimacy through community access to previously remote decision making processes. According to the UNDP (1997), it is this active participation by all stakeholders at all stages of the decision-making process that constitutes the core characteristic of 'good governance'.

Lowndes and Sullivan (2004:56) also argued that enhanced public participation is seen as contributing to 'greater democratic legitimacy' for the public sector. However, although it is argued that effective partnership-working can secure greater legitimacy by widening community involvement, the process of engagement appears to be lacking. This study found numerous actor concerns regarding the lack of community involvement in EPPP formulation compared to delivery. It also concluded that non-state participation in EPPP formulation is not necessarily representative of wider stakeholder beliefs and requirements due to selective representation. I argue that this is a critical issue, with non-elected actors such as the larger NGOs and, increasingly, private sector actors, often assuming the role(s) of community representation or 'de facto government' (Ferguson, 2010:168). Welch (2002) supported this finding with his distinction between the legitimacy of the governance system as a whole and the need for individual parts of it to be legitimate. This suggested that whilst legitimacy is a component of environmental governance, the effectiveness of any part of the system must also rest on its having sufficient legitimacy in itself, or, as Dryzek (2001:662) argued:

'Deliberative democracy requires that for a collective decision to be legitimate, it must be subject to the reflective acceptance of those subject to it, who should be able to participate in deliberation concerning the production of the decision.'

The challenge continues to be the implementation of the governance process. In this case, it is the legitimisation of EPPP through the dilution of an otherwise state-centric approach to EPPP formulation, compared to the more 'bottom-up' approach of delivery. On the one hand, we live in a democratic state which (theoretically) legitimises EPPP decisions. On the other, it is argued that reflective assent is required by stakeholders to improve uptake and motivation. In the case of 'the environment', this is indeed a challenge, due to the complexity of environmental issues. Further challenges have been highlighted regarding the logistical challenges, including time and resource availabilities, of community-wide participation. These are not unique in a democracy, though do attract a sharper focus in the governance context. More recently, the improved availability of broadband in rural areas, coupled with the wider growth of the internet and associated communications and media applications, have provided a new and widely accessible tool for improved accessibility and wider public participation. Whilst the average citizen would clearly like to be heard, many respondents suggested that the ability to contribute remotely to the EPPP formulation process would be welcomed.

To further contextualise research, environmental partnership legitimacy can be gained through targeting appropriate levels of representation from the stakeholder clusters situated within the four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum, i.e. whereby sufficient representation is required from each level through improved communication and feedback mechanisms (increased use of the internet seemed a popular idea). Thus, it has been suggested that the legitimisation of EPPP (through public participation) should be 'designed-in' and not 'assumed-in' (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). Partnerships are mechanisms for facilitating relationships between different stakeholders, but the question of democratic legitimacy of partnerships remains a fundamental one, especially with the move to give more power to unelected (and often autonomous or semi-autonomous) actors. Thus, power relations are changing, with the traditionally more powerful state actors engaging with non-state actors leading to tensions between and within different political and societal levels. The increasing complexity associated

with multi-actor state / non-state partnerships also inherently risks unclear decision structures and diminishes accountability. The transparency of internal management practices, therefore, becomes critical to maintain the support of the stakeholders as well as advancing legitimacy claims (Nijhof & Bruijn, 2008).

The next chapter explores the existing debate over accountability and the growth of non-elected actors, especially with the recent increased focus on the third sector, social enterprises, and the hollowing out of the state. Accountability is multi-faceted, with 'operational' and 'financial' accountability both becoming essential components of effective partnership-working. Questions are often raised, however, regarding the efficacy and enforcement of the reporting structures put in place to monitor and review the expenditure of state funds, often by non-state actors. As such, the empirical focus of the MTPN provides a range of often exclusive data against which existing knowledge and theories can be compared.

Chapter 7: The Accountability of Environmental Partnerships

7.1 Introduction

Hemmati (2002:63) argued that in the context of multi-stakeholder partnerships, accountability means to employ 'transparent, democratic mechanisms of engagement, position-finding, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation'. She also asserted that the accountability of all members of the partnership towards each other is one primary goal of designing and conducting partnerships. This study has also conceptually placed the provision of accountability as the final step towards effective partnership-working (see Figure 4.1). By provision, I refer to actors adopting operational and financial accountability mechanisms to enable the monitoring and review of their activities by stakeholders, as well as statutory channels such as trustees and members.

This accountability framework means that actors are held accountable for (i) the meeting of operational aims and objectives and (ii) appropriate management of funds. These are the *subjects* of accountability, whilst the second dimension of accountability is the *mechanisms* by which the subjects of accountability are achieved (Goodin, 2003). These mechanisms or 'regimes' are argued by Mackinnon (2000) as the tools of 'state managerialism', or state initiatives to retain control over non-state actors. Jepson (2005), however, contends that such accountability streams are an essential component of environmental governance if public trust and partnership legitimacy are to be gained. Accountability has gained new relevance in the environmental sector due to the sub-contracting of programme delivery to non-elected, multi-actor partnerships. These partnerships have varying degrees of autonomy and accountability, from which stakeholders can find it difficult to gain operational and financial information. Whilst this is essential to effective environmental governance, compromises must still be sought between ensuring the accountability of non-elected actors and the merits of the

bottom-up framework of some modern day environmental programmes (Imrie and Raco 1999, Mackinnon 2000, 2002).

This chapter explores the accountability framework(s) of the MTPN. It analyses how accountability regimes are on occasion used as control mechanisms by the state, whilst also often lacking in objectivity due to lack of external verification. The following case studies are used to demonstrate how some of these regimes (in particular, state-driven ones) can lead to bureaucratic drag and an audit culture (Jepson, 2005). They also highlight how non-state funders can adopt a more qualitative approach, thus often leading to increased outputs and more sustainable outcomes. The case study of the VCM then provides a wider example of an entrepreneurial approach, with its (this research argues) lack of both operational and financial accountability.

7.2 Rights of Authority, Power Structures, and Transparency

7.2.1 Accountability in the Environmental Context

Accountability is defined by Mulgan (2000:255) as a 'process of being called to account to some authority for one's actions', or a process of 'giving an account'. Mulgan argued that accountability is characterised by 'externality, social interaction and exchange and rights of authority', and that these rights of authority imply rights to demand answers and impose sanctions (see also Erkkila, 2007). With accountability traditionally taking a financial format, this study found the environmental sector to be no exception, with quarterly and annual reporting on grant expenditure the norm⁶³. When asked if 'partners are unaccountable

⁶³ Such reporting typically takes the format of detailing the achievement (or not) of milestones, aims and objectives set out in the funding agreement, plus breakdown of expenditure to ensure agreed use of funds.

regarding grant funding expenditure', 71% of survey respondents disagreed, suggesting that the vast majority feel that they are accountable⁶⁴.

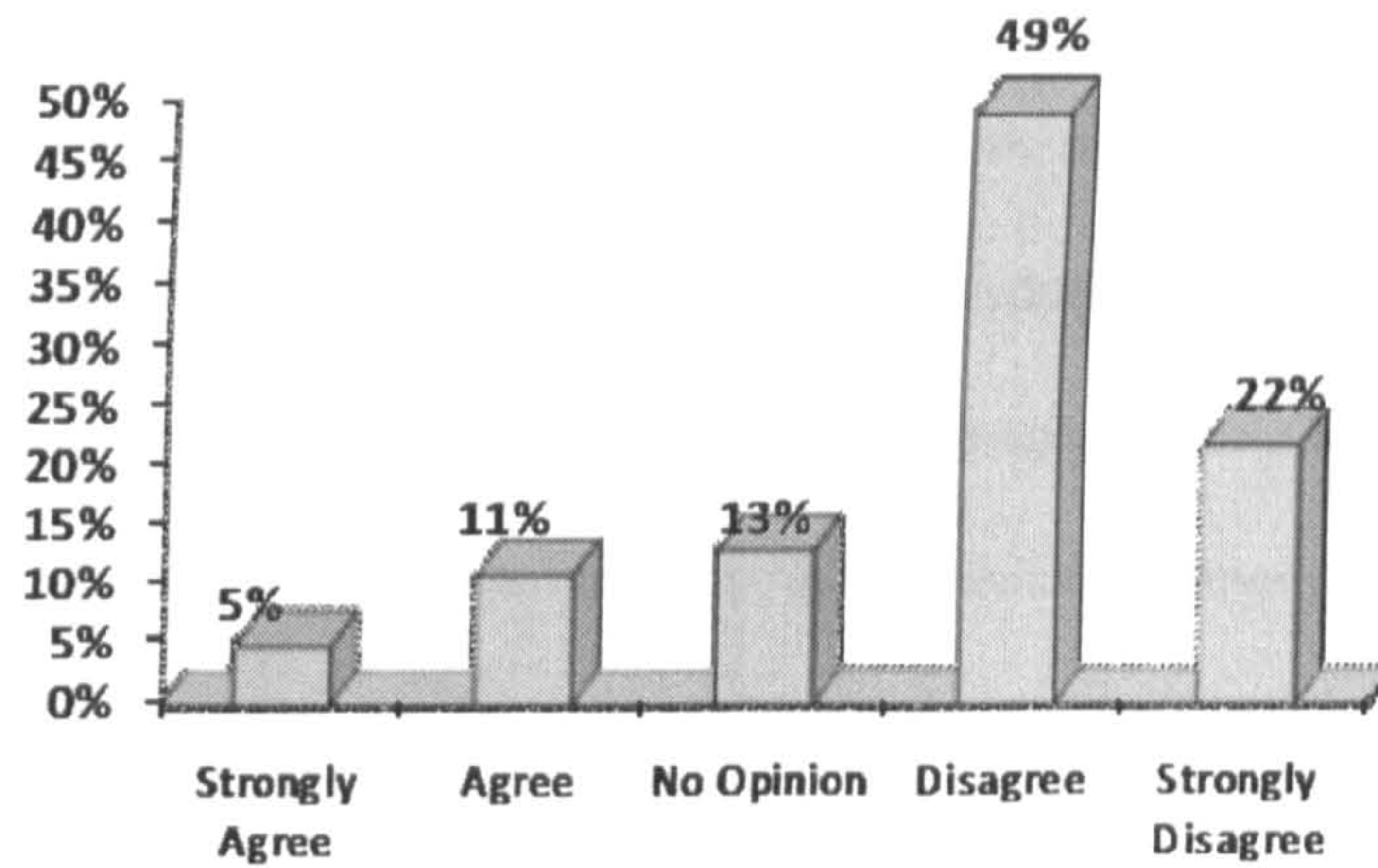


Figure 7.1: 'Many partners in our partnerships are unaccountable regarding grant funding expenditure'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

It is no great revelation that grant recipients must account for their outputs and expenditure, but the potential for partnership hierarchies between donors and recipients was highlighted by a number of MTPN actors, thus casting doubts on whether environmental partnerships can ever truly work on the basis of equality and balance (Balloch and Taylor, 2001). This doubt was underlined by the comment by a survey respondent that "A partnership needs to establish a constitution and ensure that the elected representatives in the partnership report back to parent organisations to maintain credible mandate" (Survey Respondent No. 28, public sector). The mention of 'parent organisations' implies authority and, therefore, a hierarchical approach of top-down control. Ultimately, argued Balloch and Taylor (2001:39), 'The most powerful partners are in a position to determine the time frames and set the agendas, too often failing to provide communities with the resources to challenge them'.

⁶⁴ 13% had 'No opinion', though analysis showed the nature of their role precluding them from financial activities. Further analysis showed all but one of their organisations was involved in financial reporting to grant giving bodies.

Although partnerships are designed to reduce excessive ‘producer’ power by sharing or giving power to communities, findings suggested that it can be hard to achieve due to accountability frameworks also being used as control mechanisms by the state, instead of purely reporting structures. It was suggested by some (and reinforced through action research with Moor Trees) that *transparency* can also become an issue, with actors occasionally withholding operational and financial data to maintain a more flexible approach to address often complex environmental issues. Indeed, it was found in a number of cases within the MTPN that funds were not always utilised as per the funding agreement. However, accountability and transparency are considered to be the two main constituent components of legitimacy, so need to be addressed accordingly (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008). Thus, it could be argued that accountability conveys an image of transparency and trustworthiness (77% of survey respondents agreed that their partnership work was transparent in the management and reporting of finances).

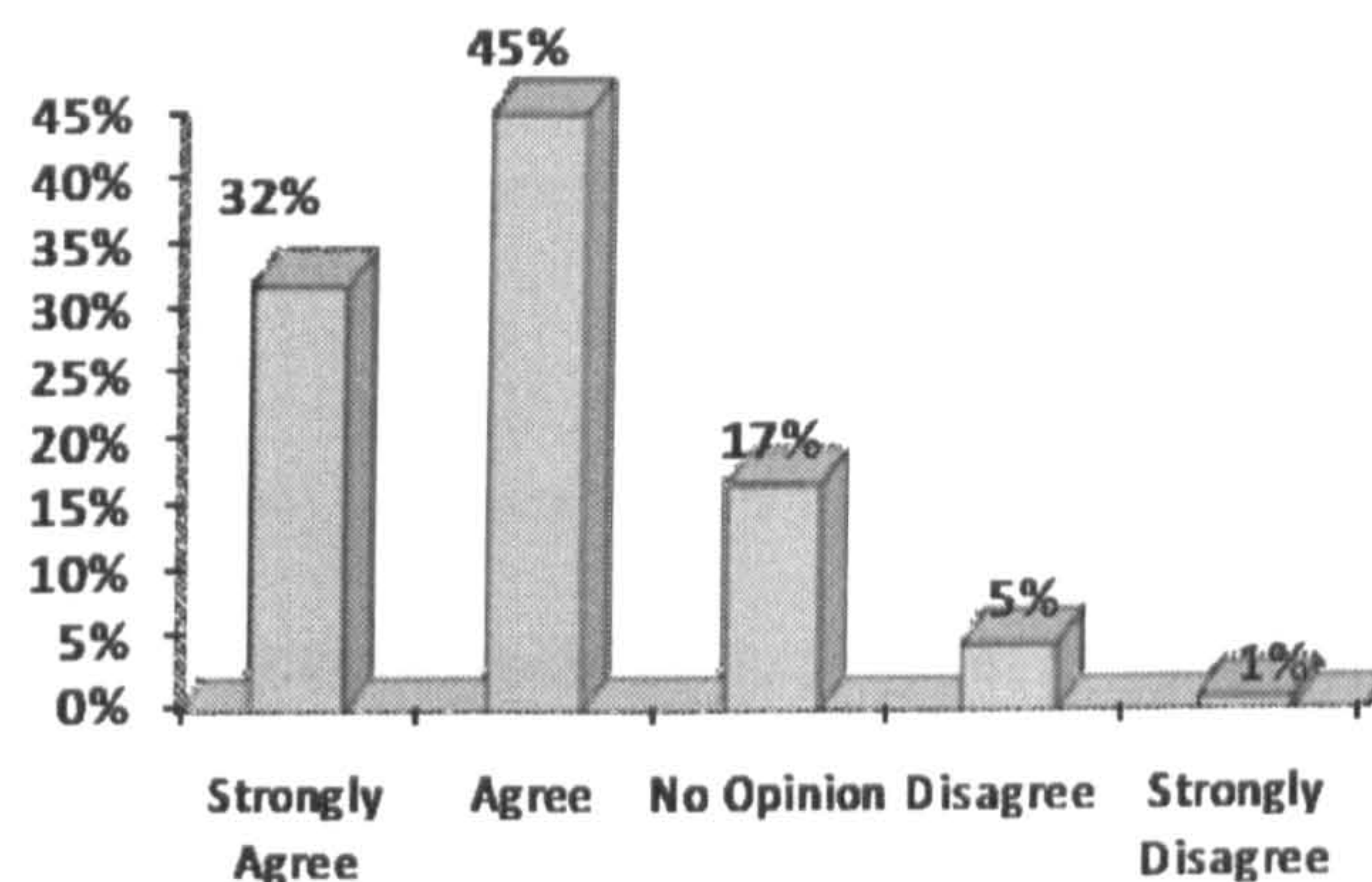


Figure 7.2: ‘Our partnership work is transparent in the management and reporting of finances’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

It was, however, suggested by some interviewees that this was often not the case. “We often report to funders what they want to hear, as long as it fits more or less within the funding

‘agreement. We tend to stay away from government and the Lottery’ (Interviewee No. 28, third sector). Another interviewee (No. 20, third sector) argued that:

“Some funders are more ‘picky’ than others when it comes to our accounting for grant expenditure. The best ones are the ones that are more interested in overall outcomes as opposed to the government and European funding bodies that want us to account for every penny through receipts and even bank statements. We do get around this though!”

Interviewee No. 8 (QUANGO) further suggested that:

“We find that we are often able to use project funding for more core activities than originally planned, though this is not necessarily communicated to funders. This then saves time. As long as we don’t lie and outcomes are more or less as predicted, they are happy.

These comments echoed other opinions from within the sector, with my experiences and observations also noting significant bias towards funders with less draconian reporting measures (this point is explored further in Section 7.4). It could also be argued that a more qualitative approach to reporting assists partnership-working. This argument is supported by the above interviewee comments. In this context, I also refer to my own experiences and observations of the MTPN where actors have deliberately diluted the detail in reports due to their actual outputs differing from those planned. It was suggested by a number of actors that this concurs with discussions regarding the benefits of non-state partnership-working, i.e. that they are able to adopt a more flexible and dynamic approach due to their semi-autonomous nature, and that a more outcome-oriented reporting systems would be more appropriate. Nijhof & Bruijn (2008:163), however, contend that with the ‘increasing complexity of multi-

level and multi-actor partnerships, the transparency of internal management practices becomes critical to maintain the support of the stakeholders as well as advancing legitimacy claims'. Transparency is not enough to constitute accountability in the context of this study because it does not necessarily involve scrutiny by a public forum (Bovens, 2007). It is scrutiny 'by a specific forum' that leads to further discussion regarding the new power structures that can be created by such forums, or funding bodies, and how they can play a role in the MTPN.

7.2.2 'Partnership Principals': power structures within the MTPN

Woodhill *et al.* (1992, in Wilson, 2004:472) argued that the 'change from a top-down to a bottom-up regime of policy-making can be threatening to existing institutions and power structures, and that there is a risk that those with the power and resources attempt to use community participation for their own ends and organisational goals and hence are not genuine about empowerment'. Evidence suggests that within the environmental partnership context and in contrast to the proposed heterarchy of a governance system, donors can assume rights of authority over grantees through a top-down approach. This can then lead to the reforming of the 'top-down' power structures within partnerships that the governance approach is meant to address, with the balance of power between partners shifting towards the funding partner. Despite this potential shift towards new, top-down inter-actor power structures, however, 77% of survey respondents considered the partners with whom they work to be 'financially self-governing'.

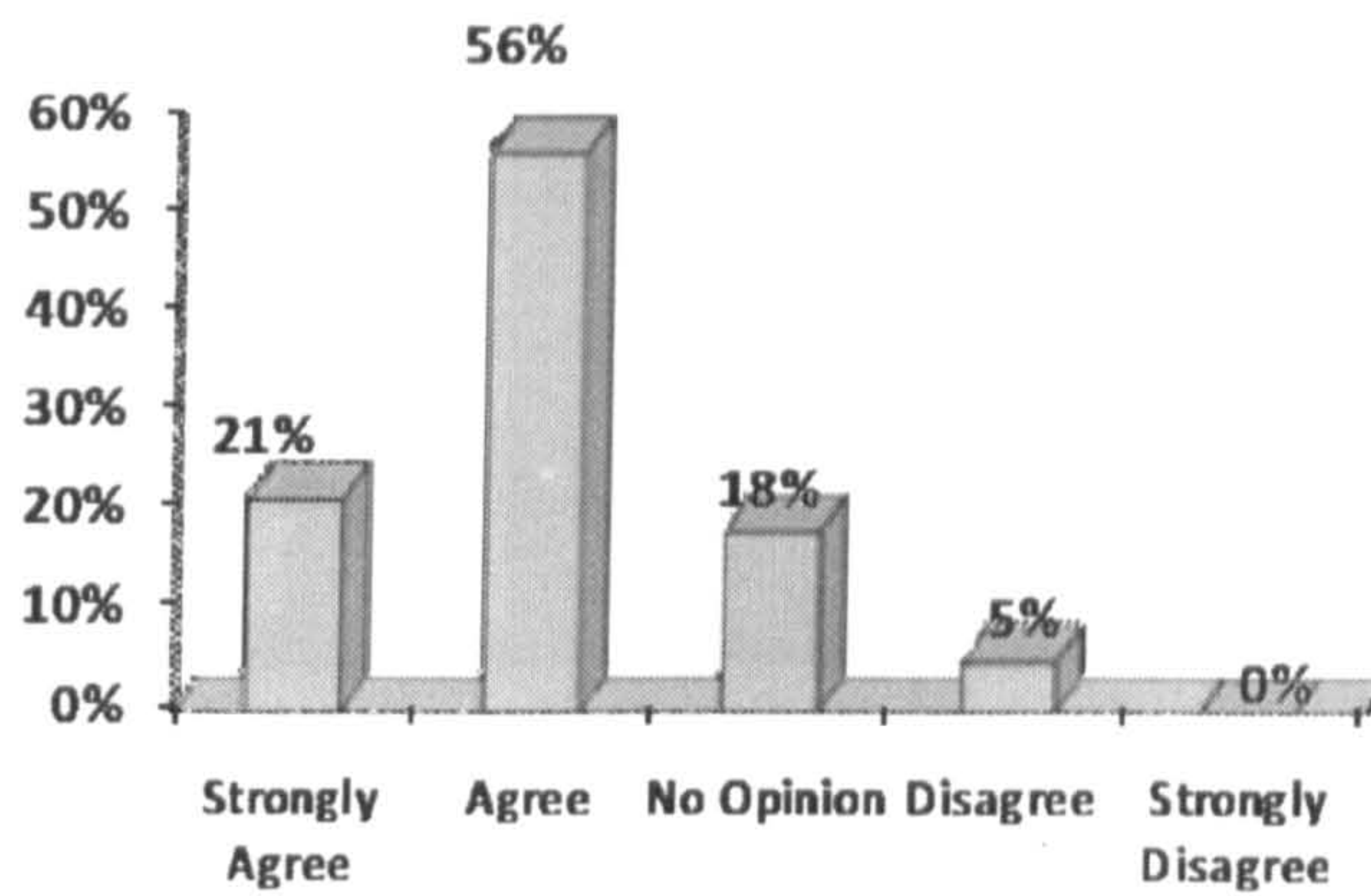


Figure 7.3: 'Many partners in our partnerships are financially self-governing'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

On further examination through interviews it became clear that whilst most organisations managed their own budgets⁶⁵, this 'self-governing' was for the most part referring to internal processes, with an external management role then often assumed by grant funders. I have termed this external role as the 'Partnership Principal'. Further examination suggested that most partnerships have their own internal power structure even when they are remaining independent of state control. Where this becomes more complex, however, is where the state is involved in the partnership as funder, i.e. the state becomes the partnership principal by once again assuming control through grant accountability control mechanisms (see Section 7.3).

Survey analysis showed that 48% of partnerships were supported by government grants (with 78% of the 38% that disagreed being state actors who are government-funded, though not in grant format). This suggests that a high percentage of environmental partnerships retain an element of state control, despite the apparent part-devolution of power to the non-state level, resulting in a complex state / non-state, power / competency sharing agreement .

⁶⁵ Those that did not were either fully managed branches, or linked associations of other actors.

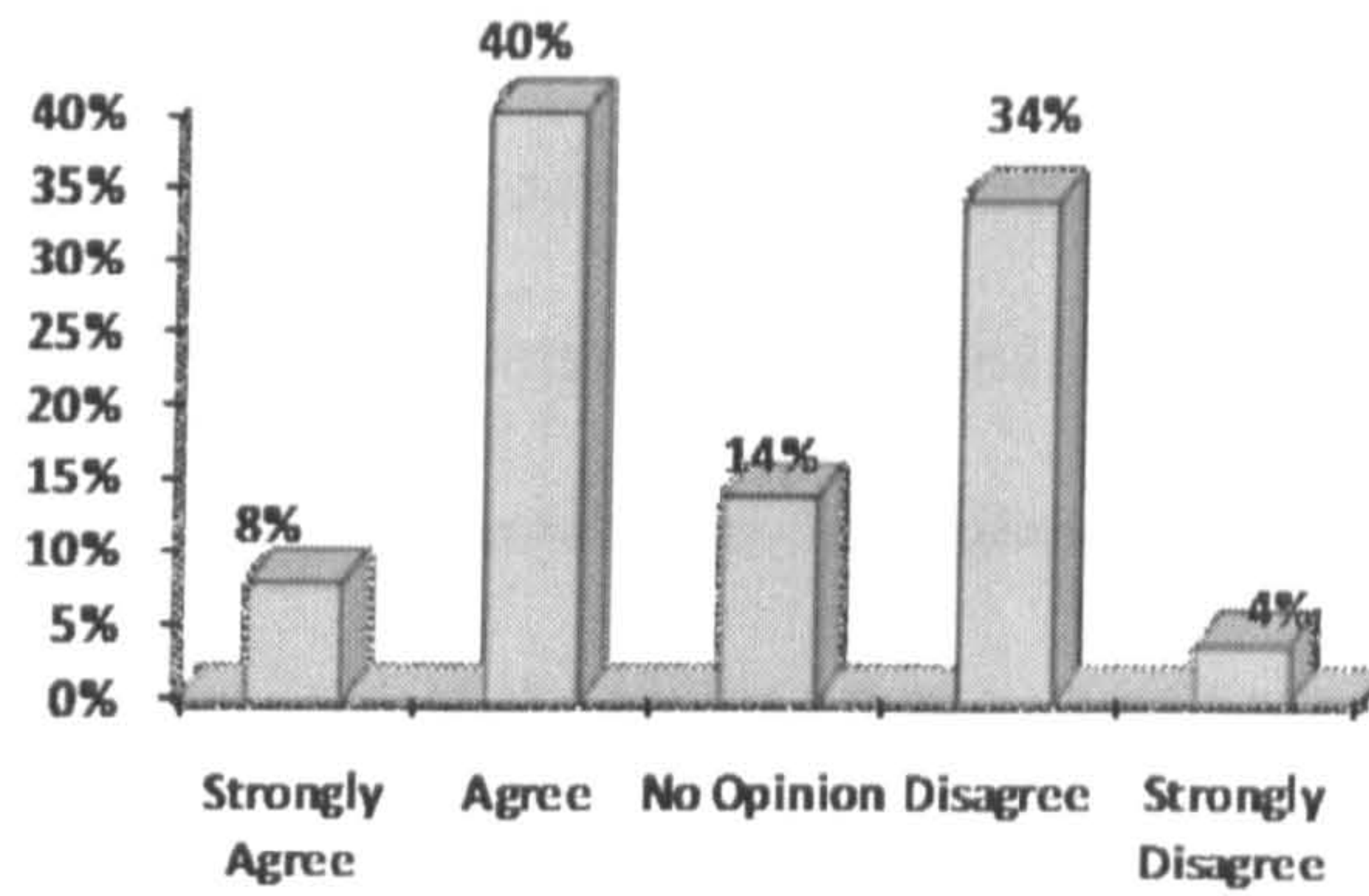


Figure 7.4: 'The partnerships our organisation has been involved in are usually supported by Government grants'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

More detailed analysis of state involvement in environmental partnerships also revealed interesting issues about the accountability of state-driven partnerships. As one interviewee (a third sector employee who wished to remain anonymous) stated "All this monitoring and review is all well and good, but partnerships run by the likes of Natural England and AONBs don't seem to have to answer to anyone but themselves as they are, effectively, the government." This point related to the researcher's action research experiences from within the MTPN. Having been involved in a number of state-led environmental partnerships, it seemed that these partnerships often lacked external accountability. Further, attempts to gain information on financial and operational data were met with varying degrees of bureaucratic drag and a lack of transparency. One example is the Access to Nature case study highlighted in the next section.

7.2.3 The Case for External Accountability: Natural England's 'Access to Nature' Programme

The A2N programme was an open grants programme run by Natural England with £25m funding from the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces initiative. It was found that Natural England (or one of its board members) assumed the role of partnership principal in each

project that it funded. The board consisted of a range of third sector and QUANGO actors. In addition to the issues of selective inclusivity (see also Section 6.3.1) and subsequent biased awarding of grants to board or state actors (see table 7.2.2), doubts were raised by a number of MTPN actors regarding its accountability. The primary concern regarding lack of accountability was the fact that 65% of the funding was awarded to either board member or state actors. This raised questions concerning the accountability of grant recipients to Natural England (as programme manager) as it was (i) state-driven and (ii) included a board populated by representatives of their own organisations. “I don’t understand how an organisation that includes board members of many of the organisations that it should be monitoring can work effectively and without bias”, said one MTPN actor. Another MTPN actor stated, “This is typical of this group of organisations, these types of programmes are always dominated by them. It seems to be an increasingly exclusive club”. These points were raised by the researcher with both the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) Changing Spaces programme (funder) and Natural England.

A reply was received from the BLF programme manager (Mike Houghton⁶⁶), which included the comments:

“The Access to Nature programme is managed by Natural England under terms set out in a delegated agreement. BIG Lottery Fund monitors performance against the terms and conditions of the agreement. The delegated agreement also includes a process for investigating and responding to complaints that relate to the Access to Nature programme. I have reviewed your letter and note the seriousness of the allegations but at this stage you must follow the Natural England complaints process before we can consider any form of intervention.”

The Natural England Executive Director (Jim Smylie⁶⁷) subsequently replied:

⁶⁶ Letter of consent regarding publication of name and letter was received.

“The Access to Nature Consortium does contain organisations eligible to apply for grant. The Consortium Steering Group guides the development of the programme, but has no part in assessing or deciding on individual applications. In order to guard against unintentional bias we will continue to monitor the overall picture of applications and awards to ensure that we remain focused on the scheme priorities and distribute grants fairly.”

This states that board members apparently play no direct role in the decision-making process, but then confirms that the programme is self-regulating. The closing statement of the Natural England letter included: “If you feel that I have not adequately addressed your concerns in this letter you may ask your Member of Parliament to refer the matter to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.” This lays out a clear pathway for advancing complaints to the highest level, but working with a local MP and then the Parliamentary Ombudsman can involve complex bureaucracy and a long drawn-out process that the average individual or organisation is unlikely to be able to resource. More importantly, Natural England refers to the Ombudsman as the accounting body, when the delegated agreement is in fact between Natural England and the Big Lottery Fund, thus suggesting a confused accountability regime where the complaint should have been referred back to the Big Lottery Fund, as opposed to the Member of Parliament and / or Ombudsman route.

The A2N case study gives an example of a high profile environmental partnership lacking an independent accountability regime or transparency⁶⁸. Thus, it provides a case for more robust and openly accessible ‘checks and balances’ that ensure unbiased, legitimate and fair use of public funds.

⁶⁷ Letter of consent regarding publication of name and letter was received.

⁶⁸ Board membership and accountability structure details were unpublished and hard to secure.

7.3 Managerial Technologies

7.3.1 'Checks and Balances': a Management of Expectations, or Formal Channels of Control?

Checks and balances aim to ensure no single actor becomes too powerful by distributing key powers across different organisations, i.e. different actors are empowered to prevent actions by partners. Goodin (2003:381) argued that 'Different branches of government representing different interests, each with substantial (if not quite veto) power over the other, might well produce outcomes that are in the general interest'. Checks and balances in the environmental sector are generally implemented via monitoring and review procedures. These were widely supported by sector actors, with 85% of survey respondents agreeing that they are important for effective partnership-working. Survey Respondent No. 32 (a QUANGO) commented that "If systems are put in place properly and early on for monitoring and review it should not become an administrative burden to be accountable, and should be intrinsic to good partnership-working and practice". The presence of partnership monitoring and review systems in their own organisations was confirmed by 72% of survey respondents.

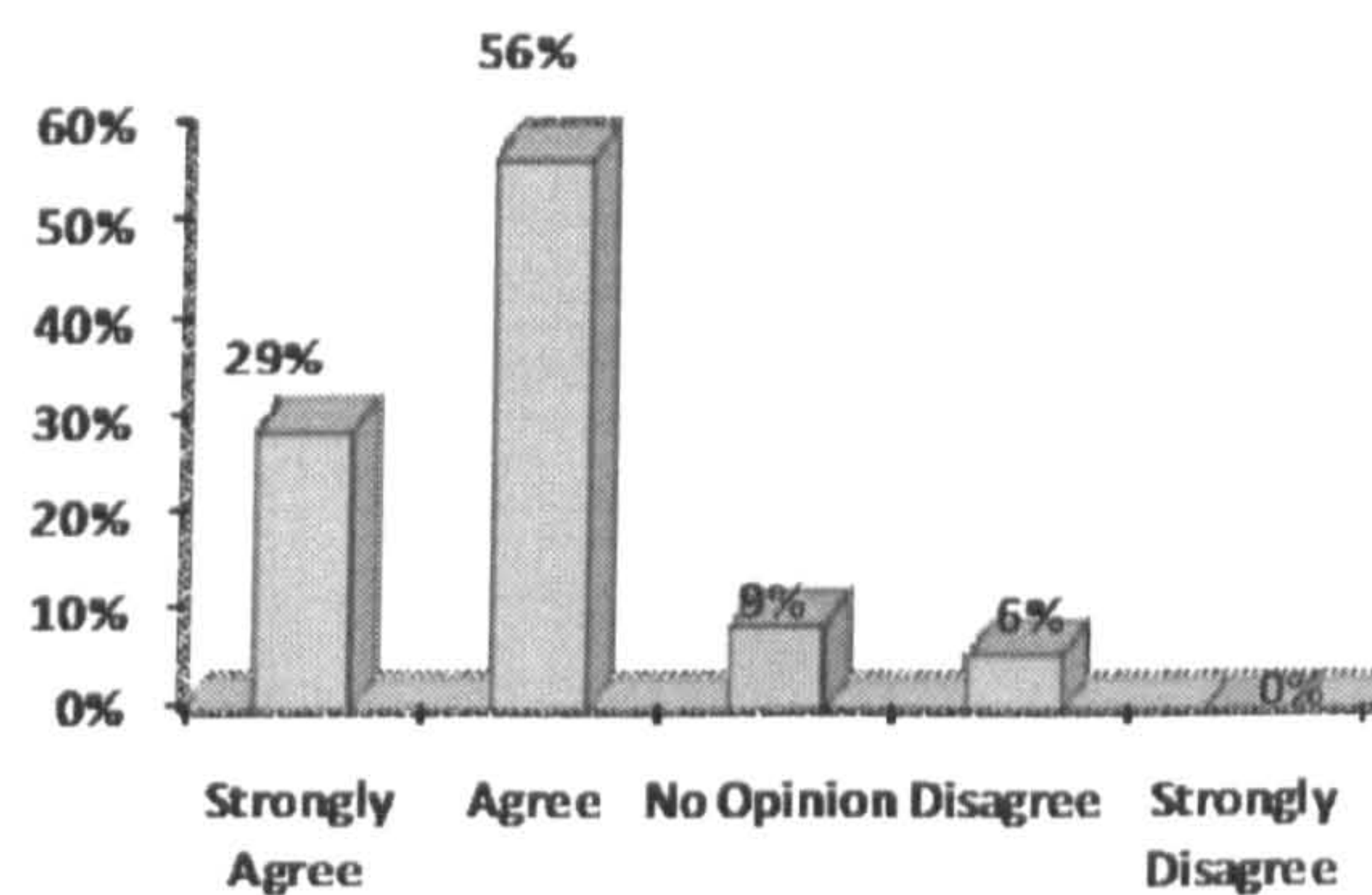


Figure 7.5: 'In our organisation, monitoring and review is an important process to assess partnership success'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

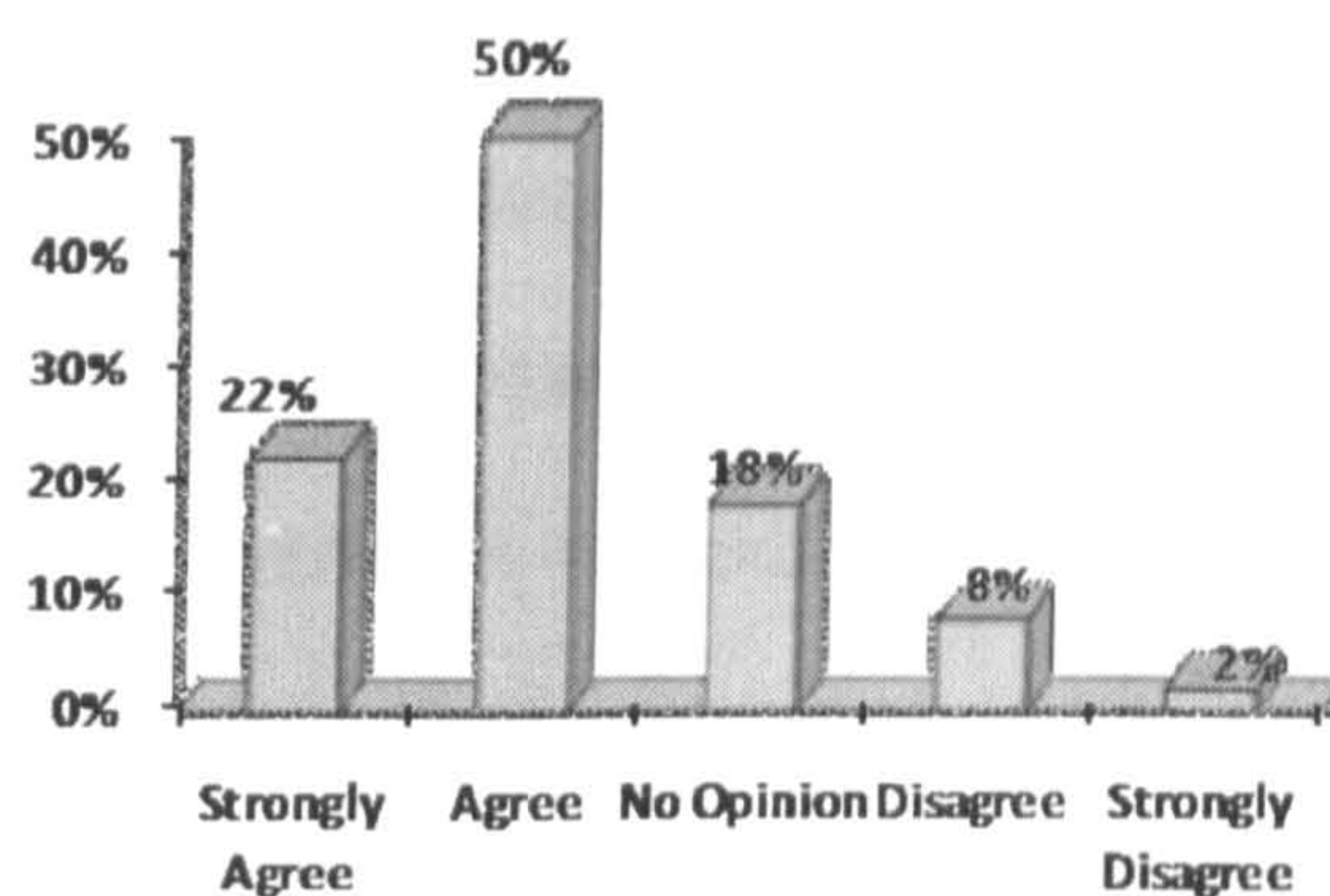


Figure 7.6: ‘Partnership-working in our organisation usually includes a clear monitoring and review process’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

To implement further checks and balances, the environmental sector has adapted the ‘legislative, executive and judicial’ governmental framework to ‘aims and objectives, board and ombudsman’. Taking A2N as an example, this resulted in the Natural England monitoring aims and objectives, board members holding executive powers, and the Parliamentary Ombudsman holding judicial powers. Moor Trees worked through its constitution, trustees and the Charities Commission, respectively.

Checks and Balances			
Government	Environmental Sector	A2N	Moor Trees
Legislative	Aims and Objectives	Natural England	Constitution
Executive	Board	Board Members	Trustees
Judicial	Ombudsman	Parliamentary Ombudsman	Charities Commission

Table 7.1: Checks and Balances adapted to the Environmental Sector

Source: Author

Survey Respondent No. 69 (private sector) stated that “Monitoring and evaluation are often overlooked, but a vital part of any partnership process”, whilst Interviewee No. 13 (third

sector) commented that “We ensure that all reporting and management for every project are carried out thoroughly”. Further acknowledgement of the importance of this process was made by Survey Respondent No. 48 (third sector) who stated that “Monitoring and review are important to ensure financial targets are met and spend is as planned”. Survey Respondent No. 44⁶⁹ (third sector) also commented that “It is important that we have full audit processes in place to be able to deliver in today’s market place, programmes can be large, in excess of £10m. You don’t get money these days if you can’t show what you did for it and where it went”. This financial accountability also aims to improve legitimacy and democratic credibility through stakeholder engagement in the reporting process. Findings from various MTPN partnerships observed suggested, however, that selectively inclusive networks and inter-partner bias does exist, thus concurring with Stoker (1998:23) that ‘all networks are, to a certain extent, exclusive and tend to promote the interests of those involved’.

PPP formulation comes before delivery, with openness and transparency sought during the associated decision-making process (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007). A2N provided a further example of poor application during the programme formulation process (see Section 6.2.2 re: lack of sector consultation). Paavola (2007:100) argued that these complex governance solutions ‘create a system of checks and balances which disperses power, creates transparency and accountability, and fosters democracy in environmental matters’. Mackinnon (2002), however, contended that tensions exist between the community that is supposed to be ‘empowered’ and the existence of regulatory mechanisms such as targeting and audit. This argument was explored in the survey and interviews. Survey Respondent No. 72 (private sector) made an interesting point regarding how the continuation of state control is bringing new overheads to non-state actors, which use some of the budgets originally allocated for specific projects:

⁶⁹ Project Director of a £11.75m BLF-funded biodiversity project (letter of consent received).

“The government sees partnerships as a way of reducing central spending on environmental issues. However, the government's paranoid need to monitor and control partnerships leads to red tape and admin costs absorbing some of the increased fund allocation.”

When asked about the effectiveness of accountability structures in reporting operational and financial data, however, 81% of survey respondents agreed that a clear structure was in place in the partnership within which they worked. This does not necessarily support the idea of checks and balances, but it did confirm that the mechanisms in place are effective.

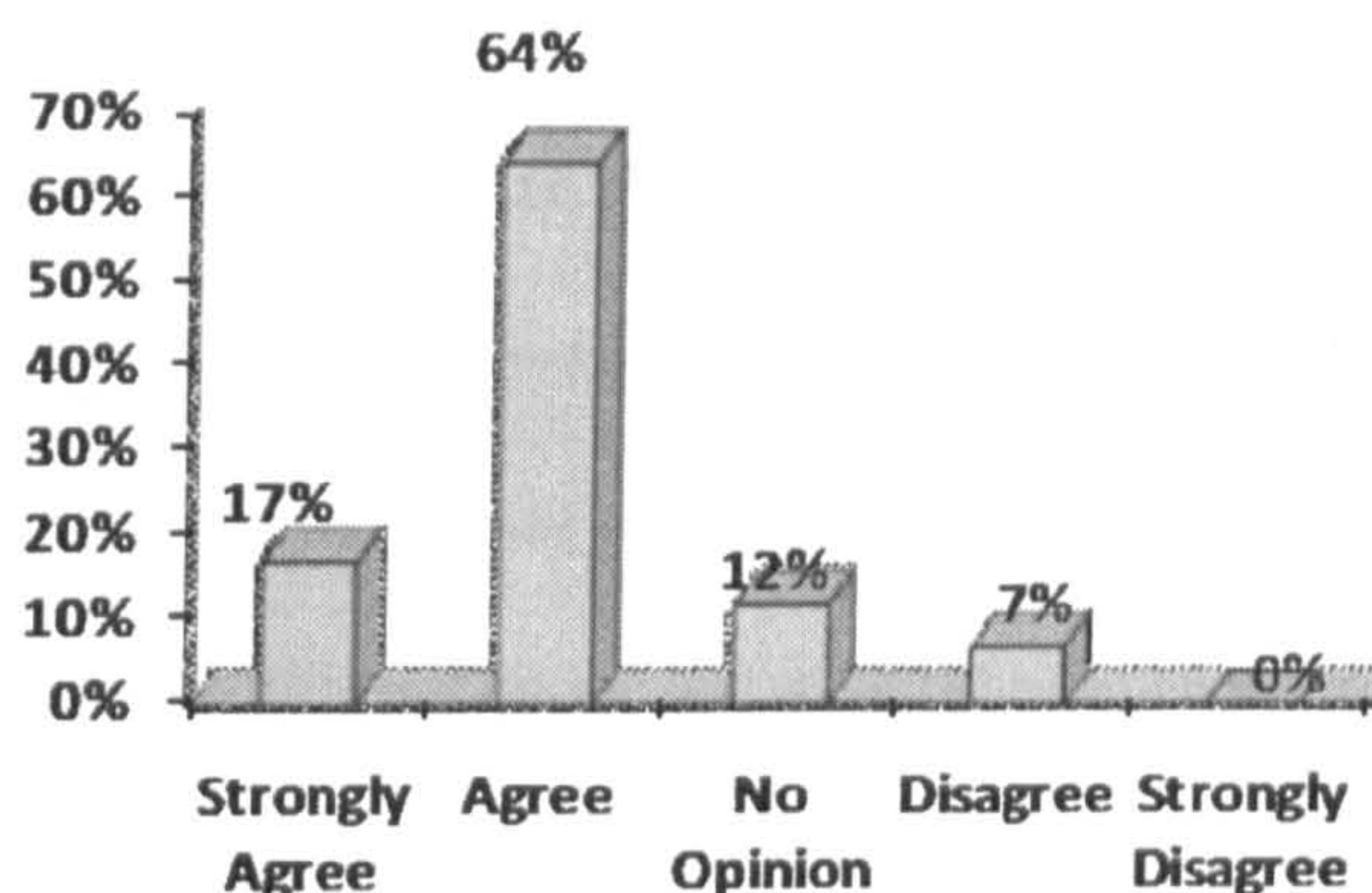


Figure 7.7: ‘Our partnerships provide a clear structure detailing who is accountable for the delivery of a project’s aims and objectives’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

The retention of state control was further highlighted⁷⁰ by various interviewees, with my own observations also confirming the existence of ‘managerial technologies’ (Logan and Wekerle, 2008; Lockie, 2009; Mackinnon, 2000). Further investigation was carried out to assess if these accountability regimes were consistent across the environment sector by focusing on the different categories of funder, which, findings suggest, often became ‘partnership principal’. These findings are discussed in the following section.

⁷⁰ Additional points were made suggesting resource-intensive administration regimes impacting on environmental partnerships’ abilities to focus on core aims and objectives (see Section 7.4.1).

7.3.2 Managerial Technologies and the MTPN

Mackinnon (2000:2903) defines 'managerial technologies' as *budgetary management, audit and targeting*. He argued that they provide the state with the capacity to shape local institutional practice and that they also ensure compliance with certain norms and expectations. Findings suggest that these technologies exist in the environmental sector primarily as a result of funding awarded by the state to non-state actors.

MTPN funders are classified into five categories (see Table 7.2), with members often receiving funds from more than one category. This is prevalent where government or European funds are involved as they rarely fund 100% of the project costs and usually require a degree of matched funding (up to 75%) through either additional cash or in-kind contributions. This diversity of funding sources has led to varying accountability mechanisms, with some bodies requesting more data (often both qualitative and quantitative) than others. Interviewee No. 8 (a QUANGO) stated "It massively varies depending on the project and the funders". Another third sector Interviewee (No. 15) commented that "Our projects usually receive money from a variety of funds. They all ask for feedback, but the amount of information they want varies greatly. The government, of course, always wants the most".

	Source	Example	Funding level
1	European Union	European Social Fund	Up to 50%
2	Government	Community Boost Fund	Up to 50%
3	Government-funded Programme	Landfill Tax Credit Scheme	Up to 90%
4	National Lottery	Big Lottery Fund	Up to 100%
5	Charitable Trusts / Foundations	Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	Up to 100%

Table 7.2: Environmental Partnership Funding Categories

Source: Author

This diversity of funders means that there is no standardised feedback or accountability mechanism to monitor and review the performance of environmental partnerships. This is not necessarily desirable, but there is, however, a common aim amongst funders to ensure that grant recipients use funds as directed by the aims and objectives laid out by the grant agreement. This is then usually communicated to their stakeholder groups, i.e. trustees, members, primary donors or regulatory body / ombudsman. The data requested by funders varies greatly, including quantitative operational outputs, qualitative project outcomes, proofs of expenditure (receipts, bank statements) and, occasionally, beneficiary statements. Frequency of reporting can also vary from quarterly, annually, to the 'end of funding term'. This highlights different approaches by different funders.

State-originated funds (European Union, government, government-funded programmes) typically demand more complex and diverse data, perhaps due to their own reporting regimes with the Audit Commission and / or the government department from whom the funds were sourced. Funds from the National Lottery demand slightly less reporting. Unlike state funders which do not vary reporting requirements with grant amounts, the National Lottery (in the case of the environmental sector, almost exclusively the Big Lottery Fund programmes) do vary with the size of grant. The Awards for All programme, for example, funds up to £10k and only requires an 'end of grant' period report summarising actual against projected expenditure, plus proof of expenditure via receipts and, occasionally, bank statements for larger capital items (Awards for All, 2009). This kind of report is typically written by the Project Manager or individual with responsibility for the project for which the grant was awarded. Larger Lottery grants such as the Reaching Communities programme (up to £500k) require more detailed reporting, usually on a quarterly basis (Big Lottery Fund, 2009). The Lottery can, however, account for the extra time and resources required by the grant recipient in meeting these requirements by providing extra funding. The least demanding on monitoring and review are the charitable trusts. Many expect only an end of grant term report, often written in an

informal structure offering a mainly qualitative assessment of the work done. Others will ask for additional figures to measure success of the project against projected outputs. These are, however, often not followed up. Some funders in this category will not stipulate any review, nor do they monitor activities. One funder said: "We are too small to follow up all the grants that we give, so we just ask that organisations let us know how the work is going when they can" – in contrast to the state and some of the Lottery programmes.

85% of the partnerships within the MTPN included an element of state funding. It was also observed that state funders demand the strictest accountability. Mackinnon (2000) argued that these regimes provide the state with the reach and capability to monitor the activities of local agencies and communities. What remains unclear, however, is at what point 'monitoring' becomes 'control'. I suggest that this occurs where the state moves from a reactive to a proactive position within a partnership. For example, a partnership that has received state funding will provide operational and financial data so that the state can monitor (reactively) progress. If / when the state takes a proactive role, i.e. by including itself in programme delivery, then this becomes a control situation, where the state has assumed the role of partnership principal. With the state apparently still in a position of power in many partnerships, the reality of the shift from local government to local governance also remains open to question. Mackinnon (2000) suggested that these technologies are utilised by the state to counter local power, whilst Ward and McNicholas (1998) also suggested that these managerial technologies enable state agencies to render local communities visible and calculable as 'objects' of government.

I suggest that the audit culture intrinsic to state-funded partnerships has been legitimated through the rhetoric of accountability, and that non-state actors are often engaged in the delivering of national EPPP objectives as opposed to local initiatives, i.e. local environmental governance continues to be underpinned by state structures, thus weakening the power and

influence of non-state actors⁷¹ (Jessop, 1997; MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999). These suggestions were explored further through the empirical foci of a number of case studies.

This chapter now explores different accountability frameworks through the case studies of the South West Regional Development Agency's Community Boost Fund (CBF), the Will Charitable Trust and the Voluntary Carbon Offset (VCM) sector. These case studies present examples of state, non-state and market-based initiatives, respectively. The VCM sector, in particular, presents a case of environmental governance in which the management of an environmental problem is partly devolved to the market and to the individual but in which the state eventually establishes the rules under which markets operate.

7.4 Hierarchical Accountability and the Community Boost Fund

Jepson (2005:517) argued that 'bureaucratic drag' is where environmental actors 'come under pressure from regulators and donors to expand performance metrics and reporting, which will lead to a raft of new and costly bureaucracy that will divert scarce resources from the cause and do little to enhance efficiency and impact'. This section presents the case study of the CBF as an example of such a donor. The CBF was run by Devon Renaissance, a not-for-profit partnership of private sector, local authorities and community-based organisations. Funded primarily by the South West Regional Development Agency, its role was to help create prosperity and jobs and improve access to services in rural areas. It was a small scale capital funding scheme (total fund size £225,000) offered by Devon Renaissance, aimed at creating and supporting sustainable communities across rural Devon⁷². It did this by supporting the delivery of services to hard-to-reach rural communities⁷³, working with groups that were aiming to increase their own social, economic and / or environmental sustainability. The fund

⁷¹ Jepson (2005) also argued that inappropriate accountability methodologies might dilute the independent change-agent grassroots roles offered to previously marginalised actor networks by the governance approach.

⁷² Based and delivering within East, Mid and North Devon, the South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge and West Devon.

⁷³ Defined by the South West Regional Development Agency as settlements of fewer than 10,000 people.

was open to applications from ‘not for profit’ (third sector) organisations. It was also able to accept applications from public sector organisations working ‘as part of a wider partnership’. This presented a similar case to A2N, which enabled funds intended for non-state benefit to be, on occasion, awarded to state actors. CBF grants were available from £5,000 to £15,000, with the fund contributing a maximum of 50% of the total project costs. Applicants had to source the remaining match funding from non-state sources, leading to multiple funding streams (as discussed in Section 7.3.1). Stipulations were made by the fund that only 10% of match funding could be supplied by in-kind contributions, with the balance to be met by cash contributions (grants from charitable trusts were acceptable). The CBF stipulated that projects had to address local needs, fit with local plans and strategies and demonstrate long term financial sustainability (see Appendix F).



Figure 7.8: Devon Renaissance and South West Regional Development Agency Logos

Source: Author

Partners also had to prove community consultation during development. This suggests the fund sought to legitimise its funded projects through popular assent. A CBF member of staff concurred that “If a grant applicant can prove community need then we feel happier that, if we give it money, then it will become more of a success and become more sustainable in the long term”. Action research⁷⁴ and MTPN actor experiences⁷⁵ showed that the community consultation requirements per project were high compared to the relatively low level of grant offered. Thus, despite the CBF Applicant Guidance document stating that the ‘application

⁷⁴ As Director of Moor Trees, I successfully applied to the Community Boost Fund for a £15,000 grant to part-fund the development of a Moor Trees tree nursery site. The community consultation included a focus group, questionnaire, and letters of support. During the consultation process it was found that many community members also expected to benefit directly by becoming part of the project as opposed to merely a contributing party.

⁷⁵ I consulted with a number of MTPN actors who had received CFB grants.

process reflects the scale of the scheme and has been designed to be as straightforward as possible' and that 'The need for applications to be turned around quickly has been reflected in the scheme's assessment process', the scale of community consultation required proved to be problematic and time consuming due to the amount of detail required by the CBF.

On further examination, it became clear that this detail was required by Devon Renaissance for reporting to the South West Regional Development Agency, to which it was accountable. On the one hand, project legitimacy was sought through community consultation; on the other, the evidence collection regime set by the fund was considered to be excessive by MTPN actors who had worked with Devon Renaissance. "We were only going to apply for £6,500, but in the end decided not to because of the amount of data they wanted about community consultation", stated one QUANGO actor. Another, a third sector employee, said: "We also decided against it because of the amount of evidence they wanted, plus their monitoring and review process is also notoriously time consuming." A public sector employee (Interviewee No. 4) also argued that "There is now too much accountability which has replaced trust in project management. Partnerships cannot take the risks they need to be truly successful." It became apparent, therefore, that state managerial technologies were already in place before the grant had even been awarded (through the requirement for community consultation), and that funds designed to support localised sustainability initiatives had also become guided by state aims and objectives. The CBF 'audit culture' continued when monitoring the projects they had awarded grants to, with requirements for the projects to track outcomes in a way that some MTPN actors argued resulted in high administration costs and reduced time spent by project officers on front-line delivery (see also Jepson, 2005). Survey feedback indicated that this was indicative of the wider funding environment, with 81% of survey respondents agreeing that funder performance metrics increased administration costs due to the time spent on monitoring and review.

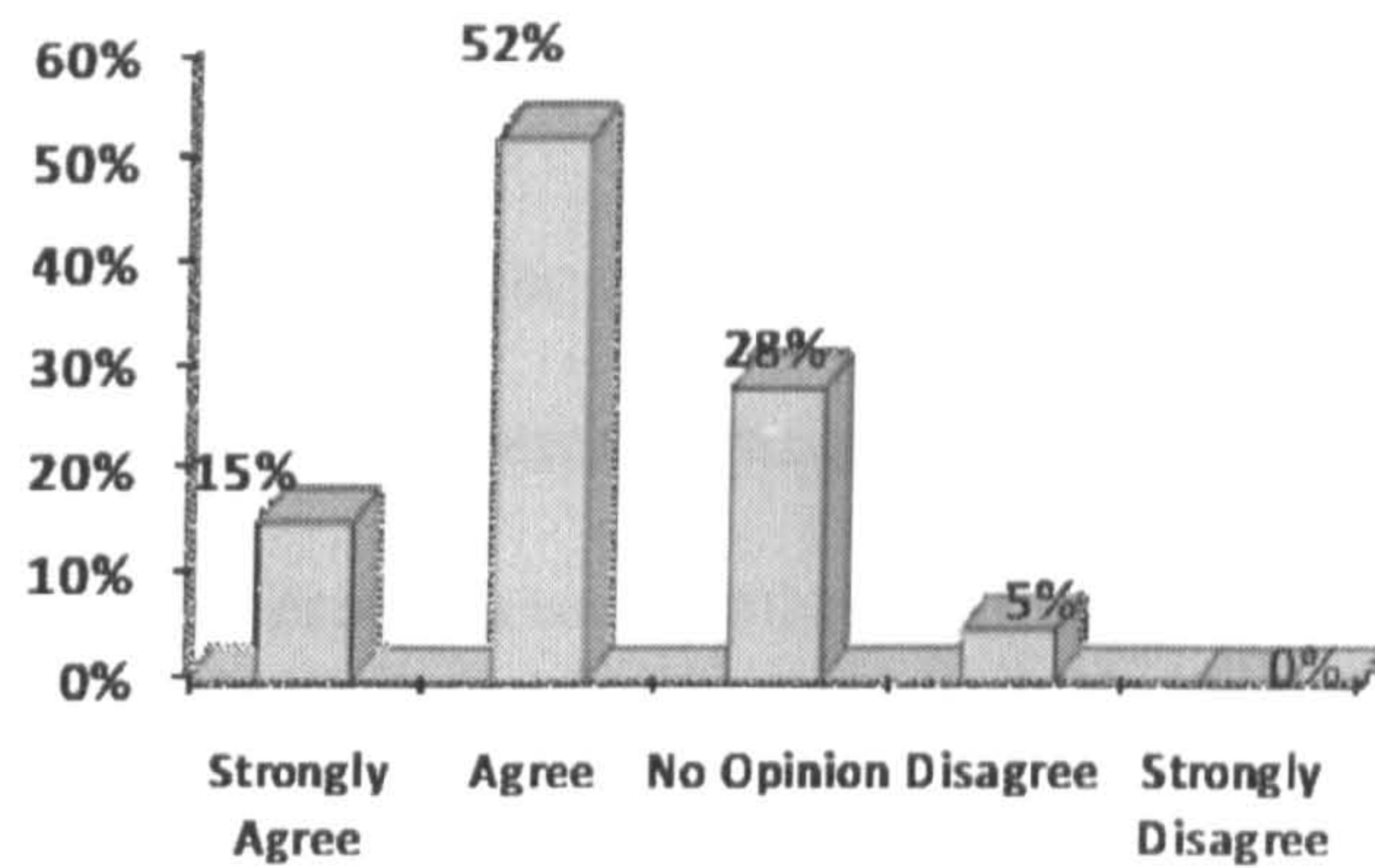


Figure 7.9: 'Funder-imposed performance metrics are increasing administration costs due to the time spent on monitoring and review'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

However, with CBF funding originating from state sources, i.e. UK tax-payer and the European Union, it is realistic to expect a robust financial accountability framework. Indeed, findings confirmed that CBF's tracking of projected project outputs was strictly enforced as a tool to 'assess project success'. To do this, guidance was issued against which formal reporting was requested on a quarterly basis. This included outcomes such as beneficiary session and attendance monitoring, and community feedback including questionnaires, consultation, observations and interviews. A data collection methodology to enable this also had to be approved during the application process and was a major consideration when assessing grant applications.

Most MTPN actors argued that this placed unnecessary pressures on already strained capacity, though some contended that such regimes are beneficial. Third sector Interviewee No. 20 stated that "Sometimes funder-imposed performance metrics encourage good practice that might otherwise be too easy to slip out of in business of day to day work", and QUANGO Interviewee (No. 8) agreed that "It is a necessary evil that we all have to do to keep getting the funding we need. It does also help to keep some of the larger projects on track spending-

wise". Interviewee No. 1 (public sector) also made the arguably profound comment that "People have to realise that all money coming from the government has to be accounted for at the end of the day. The general public demand accountability and transparency, so the appropriate frameworks need to be in place to ensure such". This last comment highlights the obvious requirement for money to be accounted for, and the conundrum of accountability vs. flexibility.

The CBF case study provides an example of a state funding programme with a financial accountability regime that many considered to be burdensome and draconian. Authors including Greer (2001), Jepson (2005), Jessop (1997) and MacLeod and Goodwin (1999) argued that such regimes suppress local innovation and autonomy, and undermine the inclusive governance approach. Accountability and transparency are, however, essential components of partnership-working, so a compromise needs to be sought whereby innovation and dynamism are encouraged through semi-autonomous partnerships that enable localised approaches to national or even international objectives. To explore this concept further, I examined how alternative funding sources provide such a solution whilst also building new, community-based power structures that suffer from less state intervention through 'holistic accountability'.

7.5 Holistic Accountability and the Will Charitable Trust

Within the environmental sector there is a clear divide between state and non-state funds. The associated accountability regimes are different, with state funding typically adopting a hierarchical, quantitative format that promotes accountability to state donors (Edwards and Hulme, 2002; Najam, 1996). Conversely, non-state funders of environmental partnerships (such as charitable trusts) typically adopt an holistic approach⁷⁶ to accounting by requesting a more qualitative *outcome*-driven approach as opposed to a quantitative *output* regime. In the

⁷⁶ Holistic accountability is also seen as broadening accountability, including actual and potential impacts on a range of less powerful stakeholder groups (O'Dwyer and Unerman, 2008).

context of this research the term holistic refers to the reporting to the sector as a *whole*, or, to all stakeholders as opposed to *individual parts*. Reporting is also carried out via more qualitative as opposed to quantitative methods. This conceptualisation is further explored in Chapter 8. Taking the Will Charitable Trust (WCT) as a case study⁷⁷, this holistic approach was analysed to understand how different monitoring and review regimes are applied whilst seeking accountability within an environmental governance framework. WCT was established by private philanthropy to make grants to other charities working in the:

- Care of and services for blind people, and the prevention and cure of blindness;
- Care of people with learning disabilities in a way that provides lifelong commitment, a family environment and the maximum choice of activities and lifestyle;
- Care of and services for people suffering from cancer, and their families;
- *Conservation of the countryside.*

(Will Charitable Trust, 2009a).

WCT carries out one round of funding per year, with a submission deadline of 31st August and decisions made by the end of November. Moor Trees has received three grants over four years; £5,000, £15,000 and £15,000. Each grant was towards the salary of the Woodlands Officer, so fell under the WCT 'conservation of the countryside' programme. Of particular interest to this study was the difference in WCT's monitoring and review requirements compared to CBF. WCT stipulate only a short update on the project funded to be submitted by the application deadline the following year i.e. 31st August. No further updates are required unless specifically requested, and none were requested in any of the three grants awarded to MT. WCT does, however, assume that project reporting is disseminated amongst recipient stakeholders, including direct and indirect beneficiaries.

⁷⁷ It should be noted that OPEP funders Bromley Trust and the TudorLankellyChase Foundation are further examples of this type of accountability, though state-funded Dartmoor Sustainable Development Fund adopts a more hierarchical approach (see Section 4.4).

I discussed the varying approaches of funders with the Moor Trees' board of trustees. One commented, "Will is great to work with. Their application process is quite tough, but this is partly due to the highly competitive funding sector and their wanting to ensure that the organisations to whom they grant money will spend it wisely and as per the grant agreement as they do not monitor projects nearly as closely as government funders". Third sector Interviewee No. 15 concurred "We have worked with them for a number of years now and rarely (if ever) hear from them apart from acknowledgement of our end of year report". This point was confirmed by a WCT representative during a visit to Moor Trees who said "We try to visit all our new applicants. That way we try to get a feel for how they are going to work and if they really are going to use the money as agreed".

CBF and WCT were both considered to be representative of their classifications, as CBF funds originated from the state's South West Regional Development Agency, and WCT funds originated from a (deceased) philanthropic donor. The funds offered similar levels of funding of approximately £15,000. However, a clear divide was identified between their accountability regimes, with their associated monitoring and review processes (CBF being hierarchical and WCT being holistic) requiring significantly different levels of resource allocation by the grant recipient. Whilst the hierarchical approach typically demanded a more complex set of data, the holistic approach required wider dissemination of a less complex dataset. My experiences gained through working with both funds concluded that this wider dissemination of grant expenditure and project outcomes, whilst initially considered to increase workload, was typically run in parallel with other activities such as annual reports, AGMs, conferences and marketing initiatives, thus significantly reducing workload.

Funder	Source of Funds
Access to Nature	National Lottery
Big Lottery Fund	National Lottery
Bromley Trust	Philanthropy
Dartmoor Sustainable Development Fund	Central Government
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	Philanthropy
J P Getty Charitable Trust	Philanthropy
South West Foundation	European Union
Teignbridge Leader Plus	European Union
Woodland Trust	Charity

Table 7.3: MTPN Funders

Source: author

Through continuously triangulating my research findings, I compared the CBF and WCT case studies with other funders with whom I had worked as practitioner and observed as researcher. Table 7.3 provides a non-exhaustive and non-representative sample of the wider funder population. It also shows that funds originated from private (listed as philanthropic), public sector, European Union and National Lottery sources. On analysing the MTPN funder population I found that the differing CBF and WCT accountability regimes were representative of state and non-state originated funds respectively. The holistic accountability required by non-state funders provided greater legitimacy and transparency due to its engagement with a wider group of stakeholders⁷⁸. In contrast, the typically state-driven hierarchical accountability requirements to a single (usually central government or European Union) entity or small number of stakeholders resulted in reduced transparency due to the lower number of report recipients (O'Dwyer and Unerman, 2008).

7.6 Zero Accountability and the Moor Trees Voluntary Carbon Offset Programme

In addition to the analyses and discussions regarding hierarchical and holistic accountability frameworks, this study has conceptualised a further 'zero accountability' approach that has

⁷⁸ These stakeholders include groups, individuals and / or communities directly and indirectly impacted by partnership activities (Ebrahim, 2003; Najam, 1996).

resulted from a new wave of market-based approaches (Bakker, 2009; Bumpus and Liverman 2008; Castree 2006, 2009; Liverman 2004; Morris, 2008). This approach can be conceptualised as actors that are not formally accountable to any external body. Typically a private sector scenario, this study found that third sector actors are working with an increasing degree of autonomy in such frameworks as a result of new income streams generated from Full Cost Recovery⁷⁹ and trading initiatives. Moor Trees is an example of one of these third sector actors as a result of its diversification into accredited education and training, research, corporate responsibility, and more recently, the provision of a carbon offset programme to the VCM (as detailed in Section 4.8).

This section analyses the accountability of the programme and is split into two sections. The first section (7.6.1) analyses the UK government's Quality Assurance Scheme that has been developed as a voluntary initiative for subscription by VCM programme providers, outlining the challenges and complexities facing this relatively unregulated (and non-standardised) market-based approach to environmental sustainability. The second section (7.6.2) then discusses how the VCMs are increasingly adopting partnership discourse and delivery frameworks, with a specific focus on the action research case study of the Moor Trees Voluntary Carbon Offset Programme.

7.6.1 The UK Government Quality Assurance Scheme for Carbon Offsetting

I observed numerous arguments by MTPN actors that, as the VCM mechanism is originated in the Kyoto Protocol, it is sound in principle⁸⁰ and, therefore, of value to the natural environment (Liverman, 2004; Taiyab, 2005). However, findings suggest that the delivery framework for carbon offsetting could be argued to be flawed, with the complexity of

⁷⁹ Full Cost Recovery is a third sector framework for covering of the total cost of a service project by charging for the direct costs associated with the project or service plus a proportion of the organisation's overheads.

⁸⁰ Through the CDM's linking of carbon markets with sustainable development objectives in developing countries.

programmes, high levels of bureaucracy and ‘business as usual’ approach stimulating acrimonious discussion at many levels. A further criticism of the VCM (when drawing comparisons to the CDM) was the lack of agreed standards and protocols. Lack of VCM accountability was considered by 70% of survey respondents to have an adverse impact on the number of people and businesses offsetting their carbon.

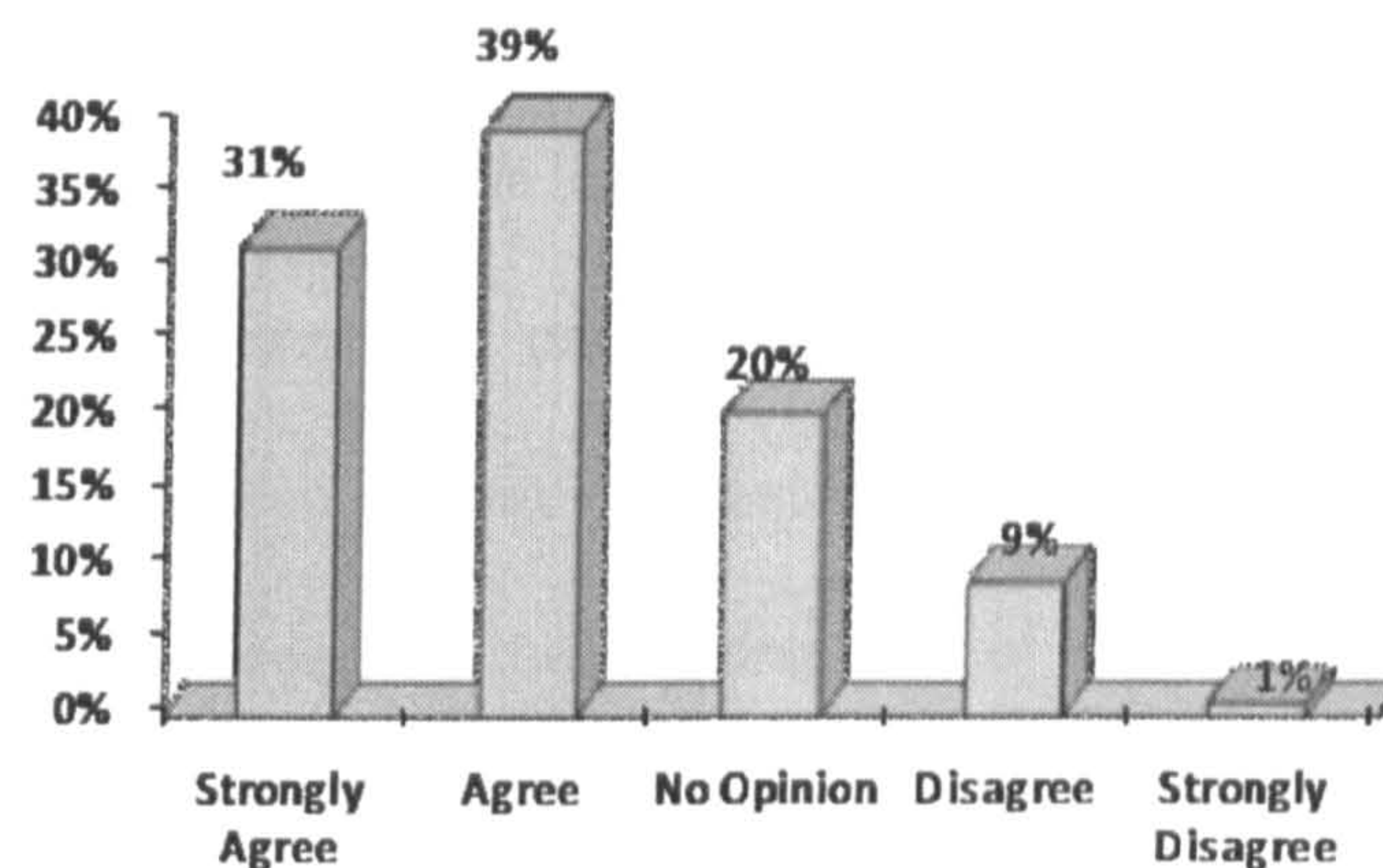


Figure 7.10: ‘The existing lack of regulation makes VCM less credible and therefore reduces the amount of people and businesses offsetting their carbon’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

Analysis of the VCM through action research found that this criticism, in part, resulted from frustrations over ‘lost opportunities’, where it was argued that more individuals and organisations would offset their emissions if they felt that the market was more regulated (see Figure 7.10). Examples of potential regulation include a standardised carbon emissions calculation methodology, independent verification of woodland sequestration, and allocation of offset funds. Conversely, some environmental sector and VCM actors argued that higher levels of programme provider accountability and regulations (as imposed by the CDM) would result in similar problems for the VCM, adversely affecting market dynamism. One example of this dynamism is the ability for programme providers to quickly create and / or adjust the types of offsets available. Moor Trees, for example, was able to offer offsets from a new woodland almost instantly, unlike the CDM approach where months of verification, validation

and certification would need to take place. There was also concern amongst private sector programme providers that profit margins would be difficult to maintain (under new regulation) with increased administration, monitoring and review costs, thus reducing the diversity of programmes on offer. This point was raised at the House of Commons' Environmental Audit Committee VCM Stakeholder Consultation (held 19.03.07). The response from the panel suggested that a middle ground must be sought to develop a less bureaucratic code⁸¹ (than the CDM) with a quality assurance kitemark to ensure consumer confidence in an emerging market and to ensure continued growth (see Table 7.4 for comparison of governance structures). The same Environmental Audit Committee panel member also stated that private sector involvement is needed to ensure an innovative and stimulated marketplace. This was met by a counter-argument from stakeholders at the meeting, one of whom (who wished to remain anonymous) argued that "Making money out of climate change is immoral and profits should be reinvested to scale impact and not distributed to shareholders".



Figure 7.11: Quality Assurance Scheme Kitemark

Image source: ActonCO2 (2008)

Further consultations defined the aims of the Quality Assurance Scheme as firstly to educate consumers about offsetting and its role in addressing climate change; secondly to increase consumer confidence in the integrity and value for money of offset products; thirdly to provide signals to the UK offset sector on required quality and verification standards to develop the UK's position as a global market leader in the field; and finally to encourage provision of credits

⁸¹ This led to the UK Government's Quality Assurance Scheme for carbon offsetting.

consistent with the government's policies on meeting Kyoto obligations and strategy for supporting the development of a robust and liquid global market for carbon trading.

	Clean Development Mechanism	Voluntary Carbon Markets
Governance structure	Kyoto Protocol requires registered methodologies, 3 rd party verifiers and projects. Credits tracked.	No formal or general structure. Offset governance decided by associated actors implementing the project.
Standards	Mandated and approved by UNFCCC.	No mandated standard.
Legal structure / documentation	Project Design Documents (PDDs) describe methodologies for emission reductions and calculate actual emissions reductions. PDDs and methodologies are public on the UNFCCC web site.	Private contracts link project developers and credit buyers. Contracts vary due to the smaller or more informal nature of VCMs. No requirement to transparently document methodologies, accounting procedures or project design.
Retiring of credits (not to be resold)	CERs submitted under rules governing the Kyoto Protocol and the EU ETS.	Monitored by offset companies or through optional registries.
Additionality and baselines	Detailed in PDD using guidance from the CDM Executive Board.	May or may not be explicitly described in project documentation.
Project implementation and actors	Mostly large multinational companies	Projects implemented by local actors in developing countries in partnership with developed world actors.
Transaction costs	Higher: complex paperwork and validation and verification of projects to attain CDM registration.	Lower: no formal registration requirement, no need to use officially accredited third party verifiers.
Sellers of credits	Project developers and brokers	Voluntary offset retailers
Buyers of credits	Governments, large private sector actors with commitments to Kyoto and / or EU ETS, brokers and traders.	Companies not covered under Kyoto or EU ETS regulation, those going beyond formal obligations, individuals

Table 7.4: Comparison of CDM and VCM Markets Standards and Protocols

Source: Adapted from Bumpus and Liverman, 2008

What was sought, therefore, was a continued market-based approach regulated through a voluntary accreditation. On speaking with a member of the Environmental Audit Committee panel, she stated that the scheme would (i) address the problems of 'dodgy operators' with

poor project delivery standards resulting from the absence of standards and regulations; (ii) improve financial and operational transparency and accountability; (iii) create a more robust scientific rationale, including carbon output and sequestration calculations; (iv) enforce post-implementation monitoring, support and review of offset projects; and (v) ensure permanence of offset projects. She also commented that, whilst a new accountability framework was to be implemented, it should at the same time be more accessible, easier to understand and be less bureaucratic than CDM, and leave scope for project innovation and investment in small-scale, local projects. As a result of this and two further consultations the voluntary code was launched, with offset providers able to choose whether to seek accreditation for all, or some, of their offsetting products. The creation of the code meant that the VCMs were moving towards a more regulated approach.

Before the standard's implementation, I presented a number of questions regarding voluntary carbon offsetting to the MTPN via the online survey. The aim of the questions was to collect empirical data from a wider set of actors to the more narrow focus of the Environmental Audit Committee stakeholder consultation which almost exclusively included only those with a direct interest in the VCM. The survey provided the following responses:

- 75%⁸² of survey respondents agreed that accredited third party verification of emissions reduction should be required.
- 85% supported operational transparency.
- 82% supported the provision of the scientific rationales and supporting data behind offset programmes.
- 80% agreed that financial transparency is required.

⁸² None of the 23% who had 'No opinion' had in-depth knowledge of the market.

These responses demonstrated the strong demand for accountability via third party verification, plus operational and scientific transparency.

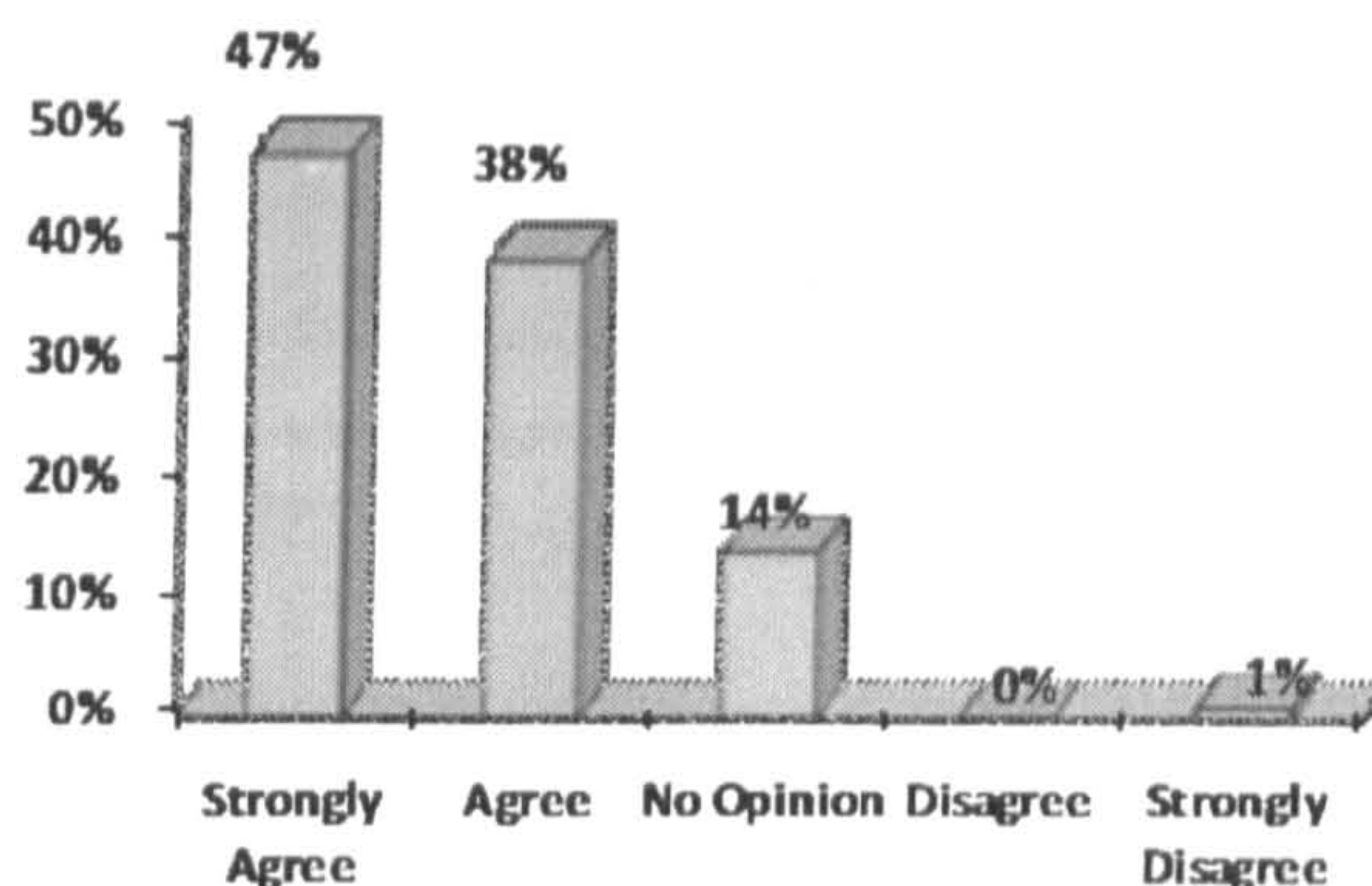


Figure 7.12: 'The kitemark should require operational transparency of its members, whereby their methodologies and delivery frameworks are made publicly available'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

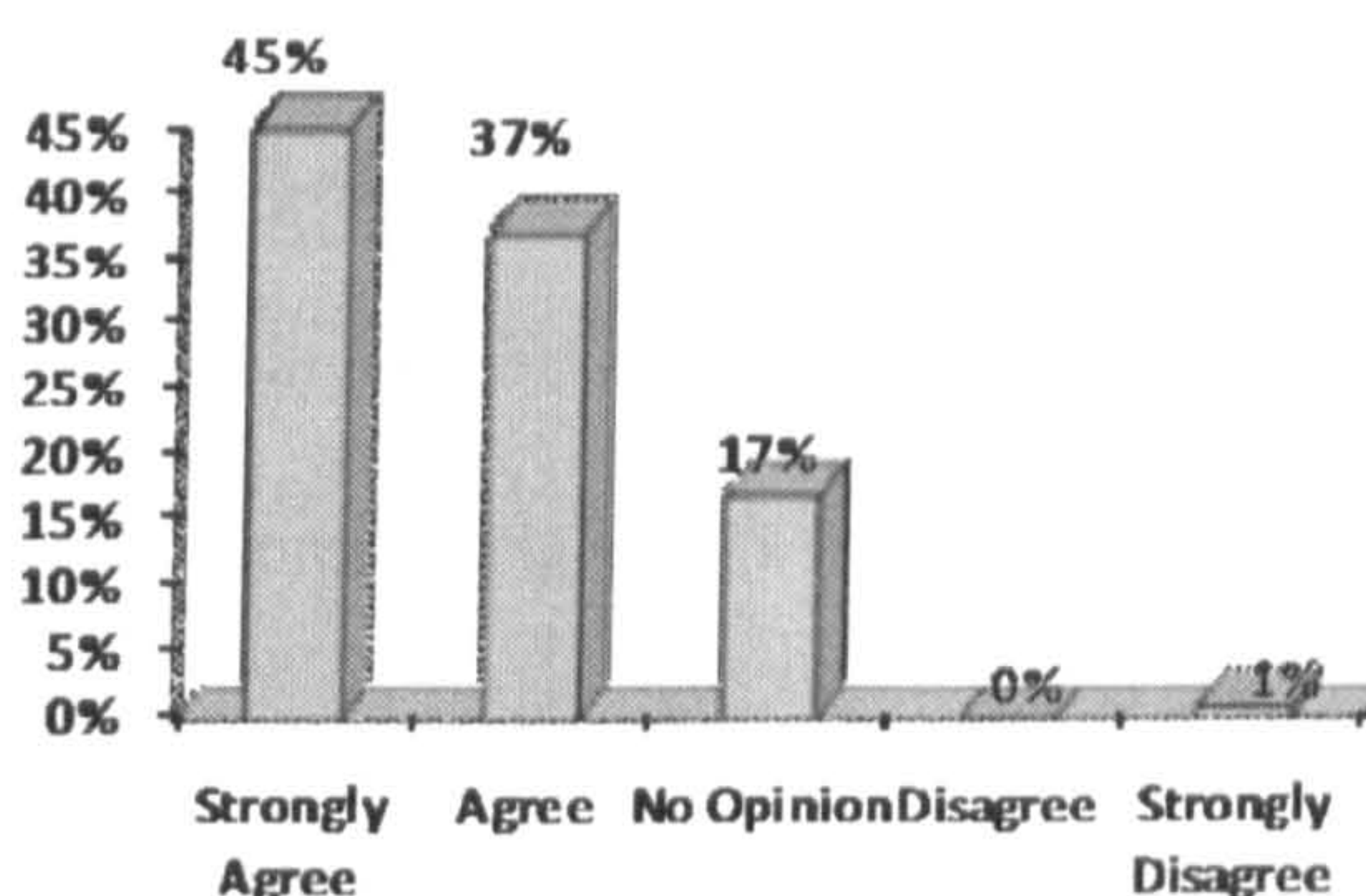


Figure 7.13: 'The kitemark should require scientific transparency of its members, whereby rationales and appropriate literature are made publicly available'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

The scheme's kitemark can now be used for offsets that meet specifications, requirements and procedures and have been assessed by the approval body (AEA Group plc). Interestingly, uptake of the kitemark has been low, with a non-state controlled association of offsetters called the International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance (ICROA) attracting a wider membership, apparently to *avoid state interference and be less bureaucratic* (as commented by an ICROA member at an industry conference).

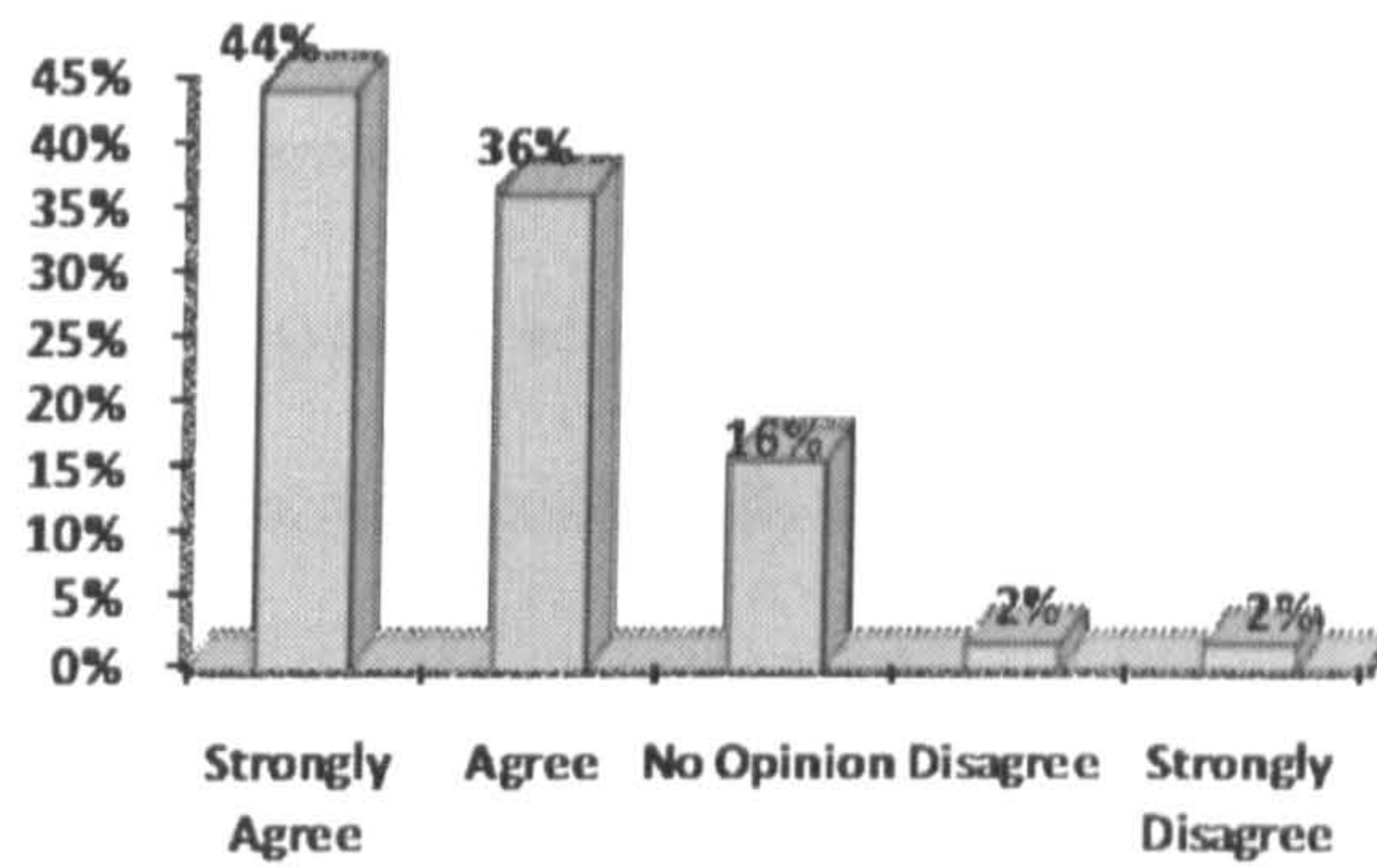


Figure 7.14: ‘The kitemark should require financial transparency of its members, whereby project income and expenditure is made publicly available’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

I concluded that the VCM required increased operational and financial accountability. This conclusion was, however, tempered by promoting the values of actor autonomy, reduced bureaucracy and administration, and the benefits of a dynamic, market-driven approach. The key here was to identify if these arguments could be grouped by actor type. Analysis showed this to be the case, with those presenting the first argument predominantly those with no vested interest in the voluntary carbon offset market, though all were stakeholders in the climate change mitigation debate. Those arguing for less accountability were predominantly programme providers or those seeking to potentially benefit from a less constrained marketplace. They included, for example, those selling offsets, and those offering projects seeking investment, i.e. woodland regeneration partnerships including private and third sector actors. These partnerships are analysed in the following section.

7.6.2 The Voluntary Carbon Market Partnership Approach

This study included working within and observing a range of the above mentioned VCM partnerships. I found that the term ‘partnership’ was increasingly used by VCM programme providers and their participants when communicating with stakeholders, i.e. ‘XYZ plc (the

participant) is working in partnership with ABC organisation (the programme provider) to become carbon neutral'. This terminology appeared to have been adopted to suggest a more 'hands-on' approach by the participant when addressing carbon emissions. This cross-sector partnership-working was new to many, especially those from the private sector. Counter to this, there is an ongoing debate regarding this adoption of 'green policies' to meet business objectives, with 'greenwash' (see Section 5.4.2) frequently mentioned by some MTPN actors. Some MTPN actors argued that private (and some public) sector actors were only building their green credentials (by working with environmental actors such as Moor Trees) in response to the market opportunities created through brand association with sustainability initiatives. Rightly or wrongly, this new form of partnership-working has led to a surge in the value of the VCM, with 66% of survey respondents also agreeing that the VCMs have demonstrated how private and third sector actors can work in partnership.

The VCM now represents a growing share of the carbon market as a whole. Some VCM projects aim to deliver co-benefits, including the conservation of biodiversity, human development and poverty reduction, and low-carbon sector technology development (Bumpus and Liverman, 2008; Cosbey *et al.*, 2005; Mackerron *et al.*, 2009; Taiyab, 2005 and 2006). Indeed, Gough *et al.* (2002), argued that the optimum offset policies will be those which provide these win-win solutions, meeting multiple needs, such as soil conservation, biodiversity enhancement and water conservation on the same land area. Bishop *et al.* (2008:75) reported that:

'Some companies have made public commitments to implement biodiversity offsets linked to their 'footprint'; while several mainstream investors are looking at biodiversity offsets as a new business opportunity, as well as an indicator of good corporate governance.'

The projects that provide such co-benefits tend to comprise smaller-scale, community-based projects. Project monitoring is less robust, partly due to the semi-autonomous nature of the sector, and partly due to the relatively high resource implications of developing and implementing monitoring systems. This makes these projects unattractive to purchasers in the compliance market, who tend to favour low-cost, high-volume projects such as renewable energy initiatives (Hepburn, 2007; Taiyab, 2006). However, unlike the compliance market, the co-benefits of the VCM tend to stimulate increased participation by private individuals and the private sector. A large number of providers offer VCMs that are subject to differing levels of verification, generated from a variety of project types, and associated with a diverse range of co-benefits. In this fragmented and non-standardised market, prices have been determined by 'project costs, transaction costs and, ultimately, what the market will bear' (Bumpus and Liverman, 2008:137). As such, the VCM remains subject to considerable uncertainty and controversy, due to its lack of standardisation and *accountability*. Tree planting, in particular, has been subject to criticisms regarding carbon leakage, lack of additionality, impermanence, double-counting, and timing (Monbiot, 2006; Gillenwater *et al.*, 2007).

Questions should also be raised regarding the *legitimacy* of VCM providers in climate change mitigation and their ability to *self-regulate*, in particular due to the varying 'carbon calculators' and certification standards that exist (Carbon Trust, 2006; Trexler and Kosloff 2006). In 2004, claims were made against the UK-based Carbon Neutral Company⁸³ and Climate Care⁸⁴ for false advertising, due to their lack of acknowledgement of the scientific uncertainty surrounding their tree-planting and other offset projects. However, in spite of these criticisms, MTPN actors have suggested that well-managed VCM projects provide not only reductions in atmospheric GHG levels and co-benefits, but add value through media coverage and

⁸³ The complaint against the CarbonNeutral Company was dismissed on a technicality.

⁸⁴ The Advertising Standards Authority ultimately sided with Climate Care, concluding that "because Climate Care had shown that, so far as it was possible to measure CO2 offsets, they were on course to achieve the offsets bought by the Phone Co-op, they had justified the claim 'for every £10 you spend on calls we will offset 100kg of CO2.'

associated offset marketing campaigns raising public awareness of climate change. Rouse (2008:388) concurred:

‘Due to the increasing number of information campaigns about the causes, current impacts and future risks of climate change, the percentage of natural and artificial persons with a real energy and environmental awareness has strongly increased over the last few years’.

This ‘bottom-up’ environmental governance approach has subsequently seen the growth of the VCM demonstrate to government the public’s support and willingness to pay for environmental protection (Imrie and Raco, 1999; Hutchinson, 1994; Sampford, 2002). Perhaps as a result of this market-based approach, the government has set a target for its office estate to be ‘carbon neutral’ by 2012 (HM Government, 2005 and 2006). As part of this commitment it has set an aspirational target to reduce carbon emissions from central government buildings by 30% by 2020, and has introduced carbon offsetting for official air travel (BERR, *date unknown*). ‘Carbon Neutral’ accreditation is sought by an increasing number of companies and organisations of all shapes and sizes. Whilst questions must be asked of the accreditation, in particular, its actual efficacy in dealing with climate change, it has introduced many new and / or formerly marginal actors to ‘environmentalism’. This partnership model of climate change governance sees partnerships formed between private and public sector actors, and established environmental actors.

This section has analysed the *zero* accountability of the VCM, including the UK Government’s voluntary Quality Assurance Scheme. This presented the case where a solution to a complex environmental problem was developed by commodifying natural resources (Liverman, 2004). The resulting market was originally unregulated with zero accountability. More recently, however, the need for a voluntary accountability mechanism in the form of the state-

controlled quality assurance kitemark was highlighted due to the unexpected growth of the market. As Goodin (2003:363) argued, 'accountability regimes are subject to the precise instruments giving them effect; the duties to which they give rise; the rights, powers and remedies that they afford'. He further argued that the non-profit sector relies relatively 'more heavily upon mutual monitoring and reputational sanctioning within a cooperative network of like-minded others as its characteristic mechanism for achieving accountability' (Goodin, 2003:367). Although the kitemark is voluntary, ICROA provides an example of Goodin's mutual or collaborative monitoring regime that avoids the hierarchical approach of the state (see also Christensen, 2003). What remains largely in doubt, however, is the efficacy of either standard.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has used the term 'accountability' as a combination of (i) 'operational' (the meeting of operational aims and objectives) and (ii) 'financial' (the appropriate management of funds) reporting. It placed the provision of accountability from partnership actor(s) to stakeholder(s) as the final step towards effective partnership-working, and analysed the complexities of accountability mechanisms. It found that this challenge is often made greater through cross-sector partnerships, with each sector requiring different monitoring and review procedures to ensure legitimacy of activities, transparency and the possible continuation of grant funding. This often complex framework was considered by many MTPN actors to be a significant strain on resources. However, these accountability regimes appear to be increasingly legitimised through the inclusion of third sector actors, with joint responsibility and ownership of programmes leading to improved support and actor commitment. Indeed, Savan *et al.* (2004:617) argued that environmental programmes 'must acknowledge interdependence, expand transparency, and emphasise the accountability of all parties'.

I introduced the 'Partnership Principal' concept to assert that donors can assume rights of authority over grantees through a top-down approach, as opposed to the proposed heterarchy of a governance system. This potential for 'external management' is a key finding in this study, as it has important implications regarding the reality of state intentions regarding the move towards bottom-up environmental governance in favour of top-down governing. Analyses of environmental partnership accountability requirements were carried out through an empirical focus on the Moor Trees Partnership Network. It focused on two funders of Moor Trees work - the Community Boost Fund and the Will Charitable Trust - as examples of state and non-state funders. Analyses of these case studies firstly showed how Mackinnon's (2000) state-driven managerial technologies of *hierarchical* accountability can lead to resource implications through increased levels of bureaucracy and administration, checks and balances, and monitoring and review. It was within this hierarchical approach that I placed the Partnership Principal concept. The chapter then conceptualised the alternative environmental partnership governance structure of *holistic* accountability which, although apparently more complex in nature, has eroded the traditional hierarchical mechanisms leading to environmental partnerships presenting a wider, more transparent and legitimacy-building form of accountability to its stakeholders.

Chapter 8 now draws on the key findings of Chapters 5, 6 and 7 to consider how more effective partnership-working can be achieved. It reviews MTPN attitudes and behaviours towards partnership-working and analyses if and how structures and mechanisms can be adapted or developed to enable environmental partnerships to become an accepted tool for the successful implementation and management of environmental governance.

Chapter 8: Partnerships as a Delivery Mechanism for Environmental Plans, Policies and Programmes

8.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on the findings of Chapters 5, 6 and 7 to consider how effective partnership-working can be achieved. Chapter 5 concluded that, despite the state seeking to partly devolve responsibility for the delivery of EPPP to the third sector, these grassroots actors are widely considered to be under-resourced to meet this requirement, with findings suggesting that high levels of bureaucracy and an audit culture present further challenges. Chapter 6 analysed the legitimacy of non-state actors delivering state-formulated EPPP. It concluded that although environmental partnerships *theoretically* enhance democratic legitimacy, *in practice* they can be self-selecting and unrepresentative of the wider stakeholders from whom reflective assent should be gained to legitimise EPPP. The chapter further concluded that the state still dominates EPPP formulation, whilst apparently seeking a non-state delivery framework through a governance approach. Chapter 7 explored the *hierarchical* and *holistic* accountability of environmental partnerships. It concluded that resource-intensive hierarchical regimes can impact on environmental partnership resources, with holistic regimes (although enabling wider stakeholder reporting and, therefore, increase legitimacy) tending to be self-selecting. The chapter also examined the Voluntary Carbon Markets as an example of a *zero* accountability regime, which, whilst enabling dynamic and responsive market-based approaches, can present challenges regarding quality assurance.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examined the case for responsibility, legitimacy and accountability as essential components for effective partnership-working, which this chapter now explores further. Firstly, environmental partnerships are conceptualised through the Policy Implementation Continuum and environmental partnership-working models. It then analyses

how environmental partnerships are typically cross-sector and multi-actor, with local knowledge, partnership synergies and joint funding bids acknowledged as three principal benefits of partnership-working in the environmental sector. The continued inclusion by the state in environmental partnerships is then discussed, with further analysis given to the assertions made by some survey respondents and interviewees that environmental partnerships are often dominated by one or a few organisations. Power structures are considered to be an important issue for effective partnership-working, plus the increased influence that previously marginalised actors can bring to EPPP. The chapter then reviews MTPN attitudes and behaviours towards partnership-working via the OPAL case study, where it analyses if and how the network's structures and delivery mechanisms can be adapted or developed to create a more general model for environmental partnership-working in the implementation and management of environmental governance or EPPP.

8.2 The Partnership Approach to Environmental Governance

Findings from within the MTPN concluded that environmental partnerships are becoming increasingly apparent within the environmental sector. These partnerships consist of both state and non-state actors and exist to deliver EPPP that are, for the most part, formulated by predominantly state actors. Data collected from the survey suggests that partnership-working has become an important tool in environmental governance, with 97% of survey respondents supporting this assertion (65% agreed strongly). The rationale underpinning this partnership approach, however, appears to vary between state and non-state actors. On the one hand, the state is appearing to *devolve* responsibility through public and QUANGO sector actors, whilst on the other, non-state actors are subsequently *assuming* responsibility through new collaborations, often with previously marginalised or non-traditional actors, i.e. those from the private sector.

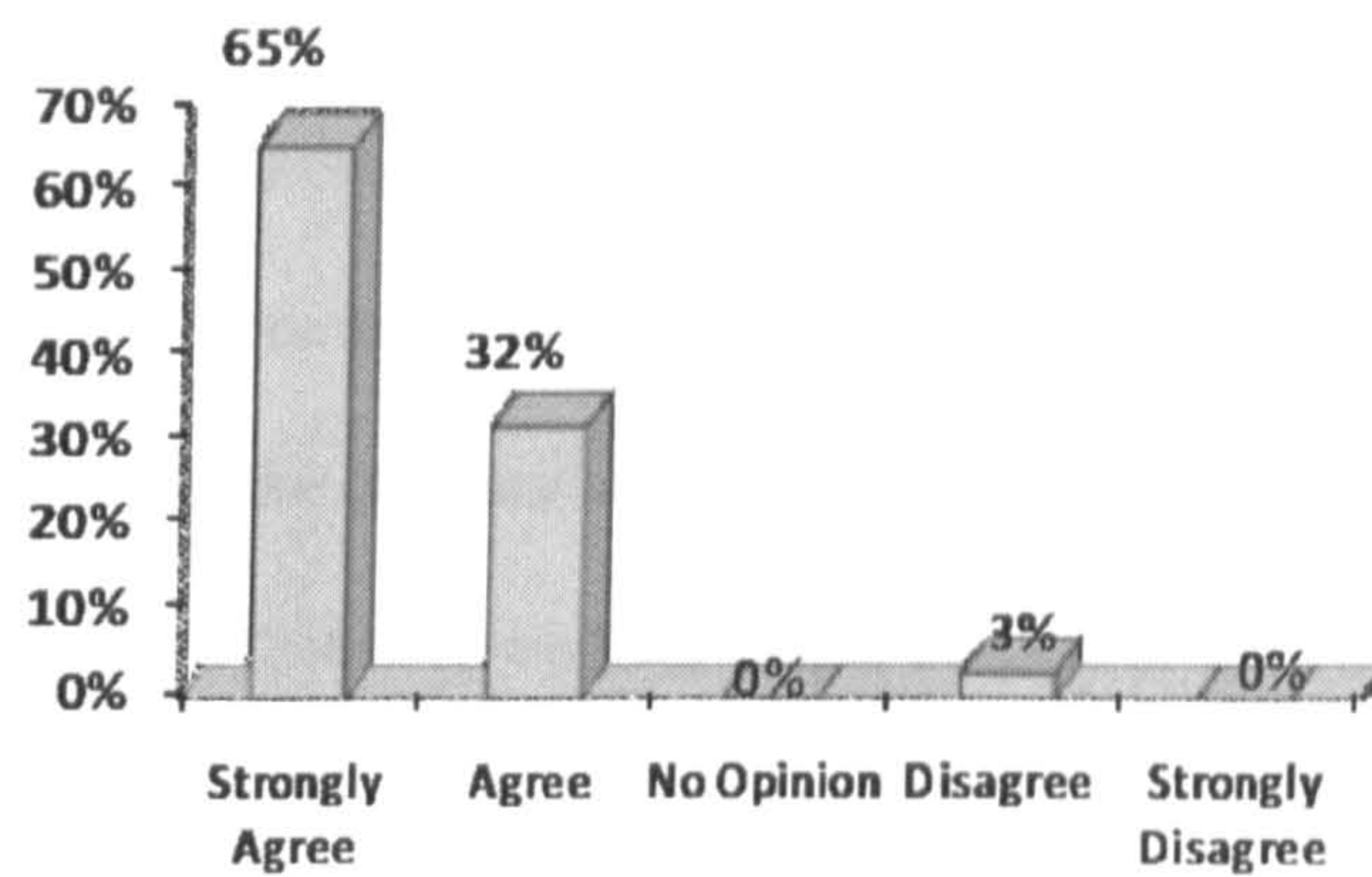


Figure 8.1: 'Partnerships have become an important tool for the delivery of Environmental Governance'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

These collaborations are through both formal partnership-working and informal network approaches. It is the former construct that is the focus of this study. The reasons for this collaborative approach by non-state actors are numerous, including; accessing new funding streams, stakeholder engagement, brand association, local knowledge, and enhanced / diversified skill sets. Observations of the MTPN have shown numerous third sector actors joining and / or forming partnerships for, in particular, funding and resource-sharing. State actors, however, sought partnerships predominantly to meet the stakeholder engagement and community involvement criteria set by central government plus, increasingly, to gain access to local knowledge, i.e. 'The top-down approach that attempts to generate bottom-up actions for sustainable communities' (Davies, 2002:201). It was argued, undoubtedly with a degree of cynicism, by some actors, however, that the state was merely seeking political gain, plus, as one private sector actor commented, 'trying to get something for nothing'.

This complex multi-actor partnership-working raises questions regarding environmental partnerships *accepting responsibility*, *acquiring legitimacy* (by addressing the democratic deficit of non-elected actors delivering state PPP), and *providing accountability* (the issue of

non-state actor autonomy and specifically concerning operational and financial accountability). Collectively termed in this research as responsibility, legitimacy and accountability, they are considered to be essential components of effective partnership-working. As such, they are conceptualised in Figure 4.1 the delivery mechanism for the environmental governance concept. This environmental partnership-working model provides a conceptual as opposed to an operational framework, though environmental partnership-working needs the latter if environmental governance is to achieve its potential. This chapter analyses partnership-working with the aim of developing a more general delivery framework for the environmental sector to achieve more effective environmental partnership-working.

8.3 Cross-sector, Multi-actor Partnerships

8.3.1 Engaging Non-state Actors

Paavola (2007) argued that the state is not a homogeneous entity, but a complex network of different actors operating at different levels that both govern and are governed. Thus, governance itself is a complex, multi-actor, multi-level process, with partnerships seeking to 'join up' the diverse resources and competences of actors from the public, private and voluntary sectors (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). Analysis of the MTPN highlighted the complexities of these cross-sector multi-actor partnerships, with Figure 8.2 showing that 95% of survey respondents agreed (54% of them strongly) that partnerships bring together actors who would otherwise not necessarily work together. On exploring this statistic further at interview, it was found that this mainly referred to the inclusion of; (i) private sector actors; and (ii) local special interest groups. Interestingly, private sector actors are increasingly valued by environmental sector actors (both state and non-state) for bringing new resources and funding through corporate responsibility and market-based approaches. Local special interest

groups are highly valued for their local knowledge. Take, for example, Moor Trees, which offers in-depth expertise and information on Dartmoor provenance tree seed collection.

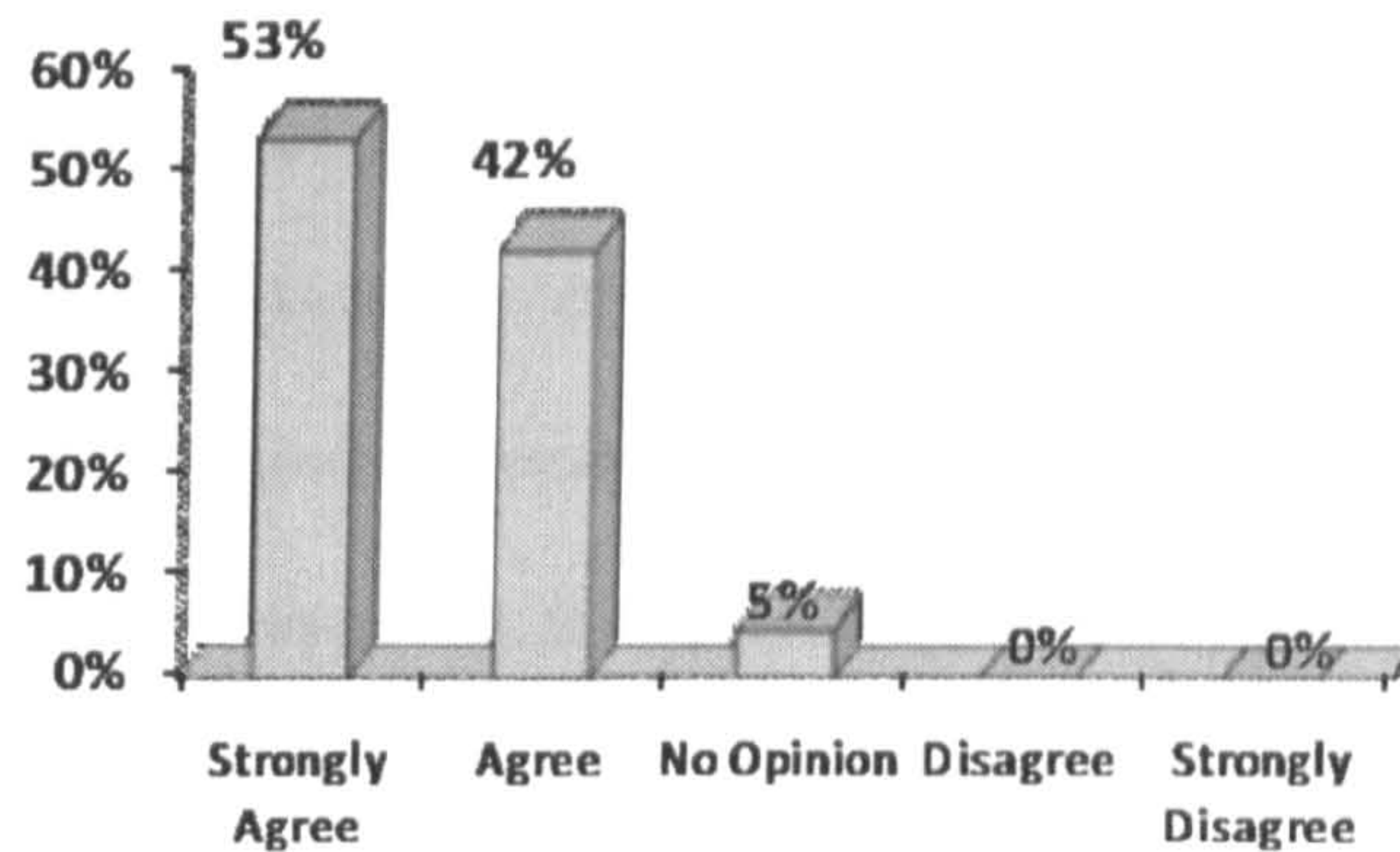


Figure 8.2: 'They bring together Public, Private and Voluntary and Community Sector groups which would otherwise not usually work together'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

Although Survey Respondent No. 40 (from the third sector) commented that "Partnerships allow access to *communities* otherwise not engaged", it should be noted that the use of the term *communities* refers to *actors and individuals* from a wide range of backgrounds. Interviewee No. 3 (public sector) also noted that "They are also an important way of engaging the public and convincing them of a project's worth". The benefits of multi-sector engagement were also mentioned by Interviewee No. 2 (public sector):

"As a public sector body the benefits of partnership-working really increase the ownership of local people on green space. This in turn has wider benefits not only for the stewardship of green space but the involvement in other volunteer organisations and friends groups."

Two examples of MTPN cross-sector partnerships include the Moor Trees partnership with MITIE plc and EDF Energy, both private sector actors. MITIE is a strategic outsourcing and asset

management company, employing over 54,000 people and with revenues in excess of £1.7bn per annum (MITIE, 2008). The company was seeking to expand the environmental strand of its Corporate Responsibility policy through the support of an environmental charity. It did this by providing a new minibus (free of charge) to support the Moor Trees volunteering programme. EDF Energy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the EDF Group. It is one of the UK's largest energy companies and the UK's largest producer of electricity, delivering electricity to around 8 million customer homes and businesses. It employs around 20,000 people and has an ongoing staff volunteering programme as part of its wider corporate responsibility policy. EDF staff groups volunteer regularly with, and fundraise for, Moor Trees. The partnership brings much needed new resources to Moor Trees. The MITIE and EDF Energy partnerships provided two examples of third / private sector⁸⁵ partnership-working. However, some respondents highlighted that these new collaborations also presents challenges in terms of engagement. Survey Respondent No. 30 (a QUANGO), commented: "It can be difficult to engage public, third and private sector groups - they tend to have one or two sectors, but not all".

Further concerns were mooted about the accountability⁸⁶ of third / private sector partnerships, with it being suggested that the increasing complexity of environmental partnerships reduces the transparency of the internal management practices needed to maintain stakeholder support and advance legitimacy claims (Honders and Bruijn, 2008). This was certainly a priority with the Moor Trees / EDF Energy partnership, with Moor Trees stakeholders (especially its members) seeking clarification regarding the nature of the partnership due to EDF's high environmental impact, especially its carbon footprint. This raised concerns regarding greenwash (see Section 5.2), i.e. that EDF was seeking environmental brand association by working with Moor Trees, for relatively low investment and no behavioural change in its staff day-to-day activities. Moor Trees overcame this by monitoring

⁸⁵ Both private sector partners engaged in the projects as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

⁸⁶ Low (2004, Logan and Wekerle, 2008:2099) cautions against an easy acceptance of new local, decentralized and multi-actor governance arrangements as indicators of new forms of local autonomy and democratic practice. He suggests the boundaries between public and private become blurred when business and other actors lacking public accountability play key policy roles.

EDF's associated press campaign, and gaining feedback from their staff regarding attitudinal and behavioural change. This was then communicated to Moor Tree's stakeholders.

If these challenges can be overcome through a more standardised approach as opposed to a case-by-case basis, then it is believed that relevant stakeholders in the policy process can be brought together to create more effective and coordinated delivery of EPPP (Greer, 2001; Wood and Gray, 1991). Greer (2001:752) also argued that 'this has been particularly important within recent years because of the increasingly complex and multi-faceted nature of public policy and administration and the inter-connectedness of decisions taken at the local, regional, national, and supranational level.' This 'multi-actor model', argued Hanberger (2009), represents a form of governance where the state shares power with non-state actors, and where public actors and institutions join networks and partnerships to resolve problems and challenges. In the environmental context, one of the most widely acknowledged benefits of this state engagement of non-state 'local' actors is the access to local knowledge that is required when aiming to contextualise EPPP to local settings.

8.3.2 Local Knowledge

Many EPPPs are formulated at state level, but delivery often needs to be contextualised to local requirements through grassroots engagement by public sector actors to improve impact. This local approach was brought to the fore of environmental policy-making by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit's Agenda 21 (LA21), which was the United Nations' acceptance that best starting point for the achievement of sustainable development is at the local level. This action plan recognised that, as a community of nations, we are bound together by a common destiny (Welford, 1997). Whilst a solution to these problems need to be found at the international level, action is required at the local level through governments engaging with citizens and actively involving business. Thus, Agenda 21 was localised via LA21 which included

approximately 2,500 action items for local councils. LA21 stated that each local authority had to draw up its own LA21 strategy following discussion with local communities to prioritise local sustainable development actions. The main aim of this approach was to make sustainable development a community issue, involving public, private and community sector actors. As a result of this, not only would local communities be engaged as global citizens, but it would create a resource of local knowledge, skills and expertise.

When asked about the inclusion of local actors to deliver EPPPs, Interviewee No. 1 (public sector) stated that “Working in partnership brings a variety of good experience and knowledge to a project group. It allows a project to draw on a range of local resources and networks that might not otherwise be accessible.” The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan, for example, is devolved to the local level through a series of Local Biodiversity Action Plans which are each contextualised to local species needs and requirements. This plan presents a compelling case for increasing the interchange between central policy-makers and frontline staff involved in devolved forms of governance, where there is a transferral of discretion and responsibility over resources to those with local knowledge to adapt policy to local circumstances (Pearce and Mawson, 2003:57). This could include, for example, the allocation of funds to local (non-state) actors, although the legitimacy of the actors would need to be presented to, and accepted by, the wider community. An accountability structure would also need to be put in place that balances accounting for the use of state / public funds with the ability for the local actor to remain, to a degree, dynamic and flexible in their approach to plan delivery.

The local approach is further illustrated by the Higher Level Stewardship scheme (highlighted in Section 4.3), which allows local flexibility and the use of local knowledge to adapt management to allow for variations in conditions over a period of time and across different areas of land (Franks and McGloin, 2006). Thus, local expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm are harnessed by this state-funding programme to generate innovative methods to plug the

'implementation gap' of policy and practice (Greer, 2001). However, it has been suggested that, despite acknowledgement of the benefits of the local approach, some scheme prescriptions lack flexibility and local knowledge is disregarded. Indeed, Survey Respondent No. 29 (a QUANGO) stated that "We do bring local knowledge through our network of conservation advisors throughout the country", suggesting that whilst the need for local knowledge is acknowledged, it is (by some) still sought from 'in-house' expertise. Researcher experiences supported this suggestion, with a general avoidance of partnership-working evident within this particular QUANGO. Perhaps a rationale for this apparent avoidance of partnerships-working is Eden *et al.*'s (2006) argument that environmental governance involves such a diverse range of stakeholders that it is too complicated and contentious to decide how to legitimate the environmental knowledge and contributions of very different groups.

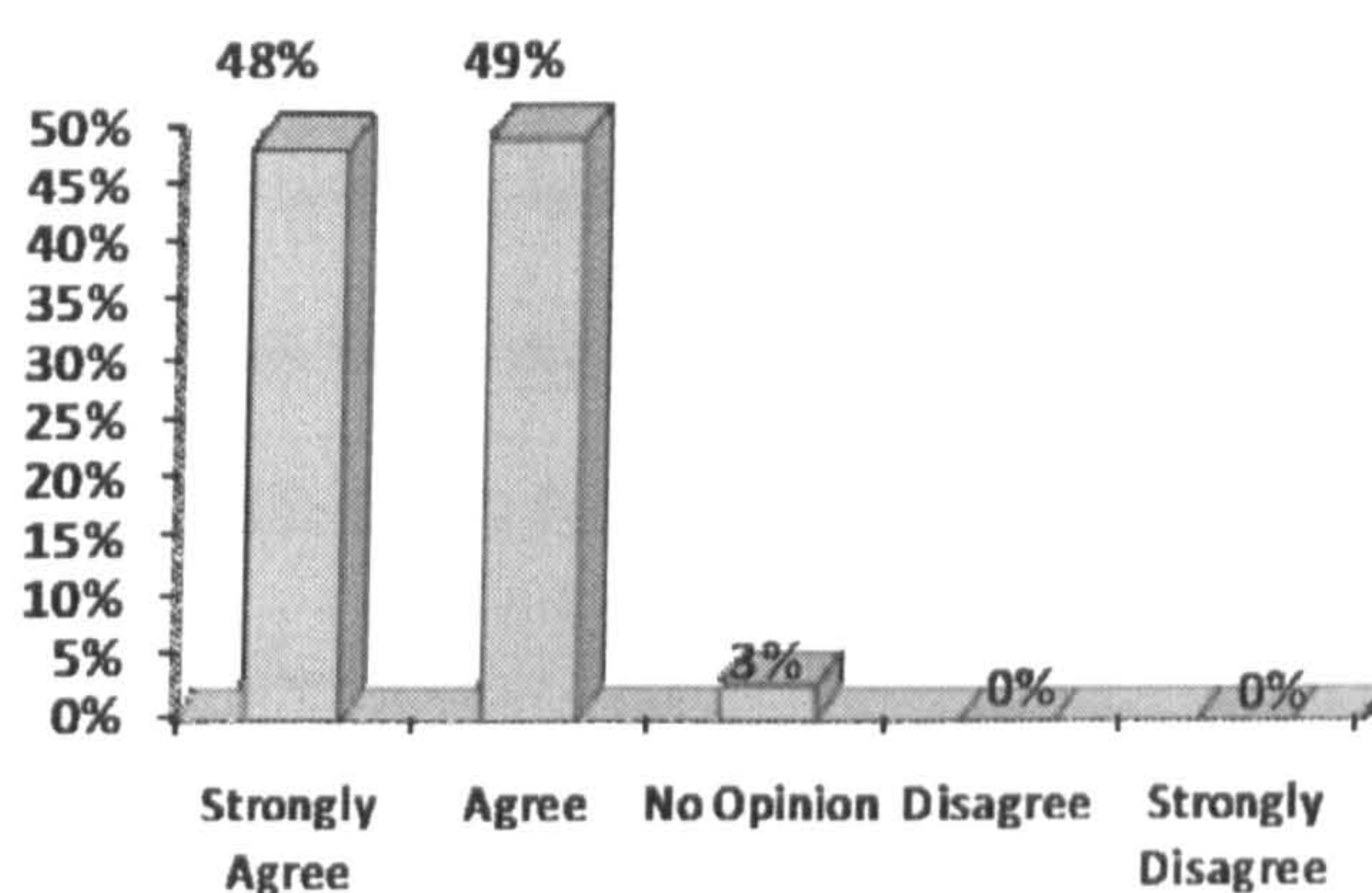


Figure 8.3: 'Partnership increase the availability of local knowledge'

Source: Author's Questionnaire

However, Figure 8.3 shows that 97% of survey respondents agreed that partnerships increase the availability of local knowledge when national or regional actors work with local partners, with Interviewee No. 6 (a QUANGO) commenting that partnerships "...build on current skill sets and ensure a much more coordinated approach of otherwise disjointed projects / programmes". Survey Respondent No. 62 (private sector) further commented that "Partnership benefits are generally mutual. Small charities and NGOs generally benefit

financially from the private sector which then in itself benefits from knowledge and experience obtained from specialist charities like Moor Trees.”

In 1999, the DETR (in Raco and Imrie, 2000) reported that assumptions are made that local communities have a unique set of knowledge without which policy programmes are inherently limited, and that partnerships are required to establish mechanisms through which community representatives “play a full and effective role, supported by local structures that allow the community viewpoint to be heard and partnership decisions to be fed back to the community”. Although this quote was in the urban context, it is also relevant to the environmental sector. Sampford (2002:79) concurred:

‘Our ‘knowledge’ of our environment, it’s almost infinite diversity, the threats to its balance and some of the means of limiting those threats and dealing with its consequences is daily growing. Extensive research utilising traditional scientific method is not only growing but also benefiting from the recognition of ‘local’ knowledge about the environment from traditional sources’.

A central pillar of the governance concept is community involvement in decisions that affect them. Local knowledge that comes with this community involvement should, therefore, be respected and taken into consideration in these decision-making processes. Indeed, Summerville *et al.* (2008) argued that the inclusion of communities and the incorporation of local knowledge in these sustainable development decision-making processes should, morally and ethically, be basic community rights. Further, Wallington *et al.* (2008) argued that local knowledge, experience and decision-making bring potential mutuality gains in a network-based governance strategy. The MTPN includes various small third sector organisations that are able to bring local knowledge and community involvement to partnerships. Moor Trees, in particular, provides woodland knowledge and expertise alongside extensive social networks

that present the opportunity for larger, regional or national actors to quickly and effectively access a diverse range of data, locations and beneficiaries. One such partnership is 'OPAL', the Open Air Laboratories network, which is reviewed in Section 8.5. These partnerships between actors of varying sizes (by size, I mean financial turnover, resources available, and area of operation) can often become synergistic, where outputs can become greater than would have otherwise been generated had the actors been working separately.

8.3.3 Partnership Synergies

The benefits of partnership-working need to be highlighted and then maximised, including the potential synergies and access to new funding streams that exist through state / non-state collaborations. Environmental partnerships are based on the principle of seeking collaborative advantage to solve complex environmental problems (Darlow and Newby, 1997; Huxham, 1996; Healy, 1992). One of the main benefits of partnerships is the synergies created when two or more organisations work together to produce the outcomes greater than the sum of the separate parts (Hastings, 1996). Partnership synergies were widely acknowledged by MTPN actors, with Survey Respondent No. 23 (public sector), who commented that they enabled “more community involvement in a project than would be possible working in isolation or if we were working in parallel with other organisations”. This working ‘in parallel’ referred to the synergy created by organisations coming together. Survey Respondent No. 51 (third sector) also said that “They allow things to be achieved that individual organisations (including government) could not do on their own”. Interviewee No. 18 (private sector) concurred:

“Local authorities have been slow to understand the principles of partnerships but have slowly come to realise the possibilities for synergy and new opportunities. They are not always in “partnership” mode and will still steal ideas from smaller organisations and claim them as their own if they can get away with it”.

Environmental partnership synergies can also be seen in practice, one example is forestry carbon sequestration as a climate change mitigation solution. On the one hand, private and third sector organisations work together to fund and manage the projects, whilst on the other, additional, synergistic opportunities are realised through sustainable development diversification initiatives such as short rotation coppice within new forests. It has been suggested by Martin (1995) that there have historically been few incentives for agencies to exploit the potential synergies offered by inter-agency co-operation. More recently, however, new opportunities have arisen in the UK via new Lottery and Europe funding programmes to encourage partnership-working. These new programmes have encouraged state and non-state actors to collaborate on EPPPs to leverage these new and / or previously inaccessible funding streams.

8.3.4 New Funding Streams

Funding is high on the agenda of almost every MTPN actor. Partnerships are widely acknowledged by MTPN actors to provide new funding opportunities, with 85% of survey respondents agreeing that partnerships increase the financial resources available to individual partners (see Section 5.3). Public sector actors also actively pursue additional funding opportunities to subsidise increasingly constrained central government budgets (this is discussed in greater detail in the next section).

Although data suggest that partnership-working provides new funding opportunities for EPPP, it also highlights how these new and often complex funding arrangements can be subject to resource-intensive financial and operational accountability regimes that can prove challenging to the partners if they are not resourced to manage them effectively (Section 7.4 provides the case study of the Community Boost Fund). Survey Respondent No. 69 (private sector)

commented that “If not well organised from the start, they can take up enormous amount of time and draw on existing capacity”.

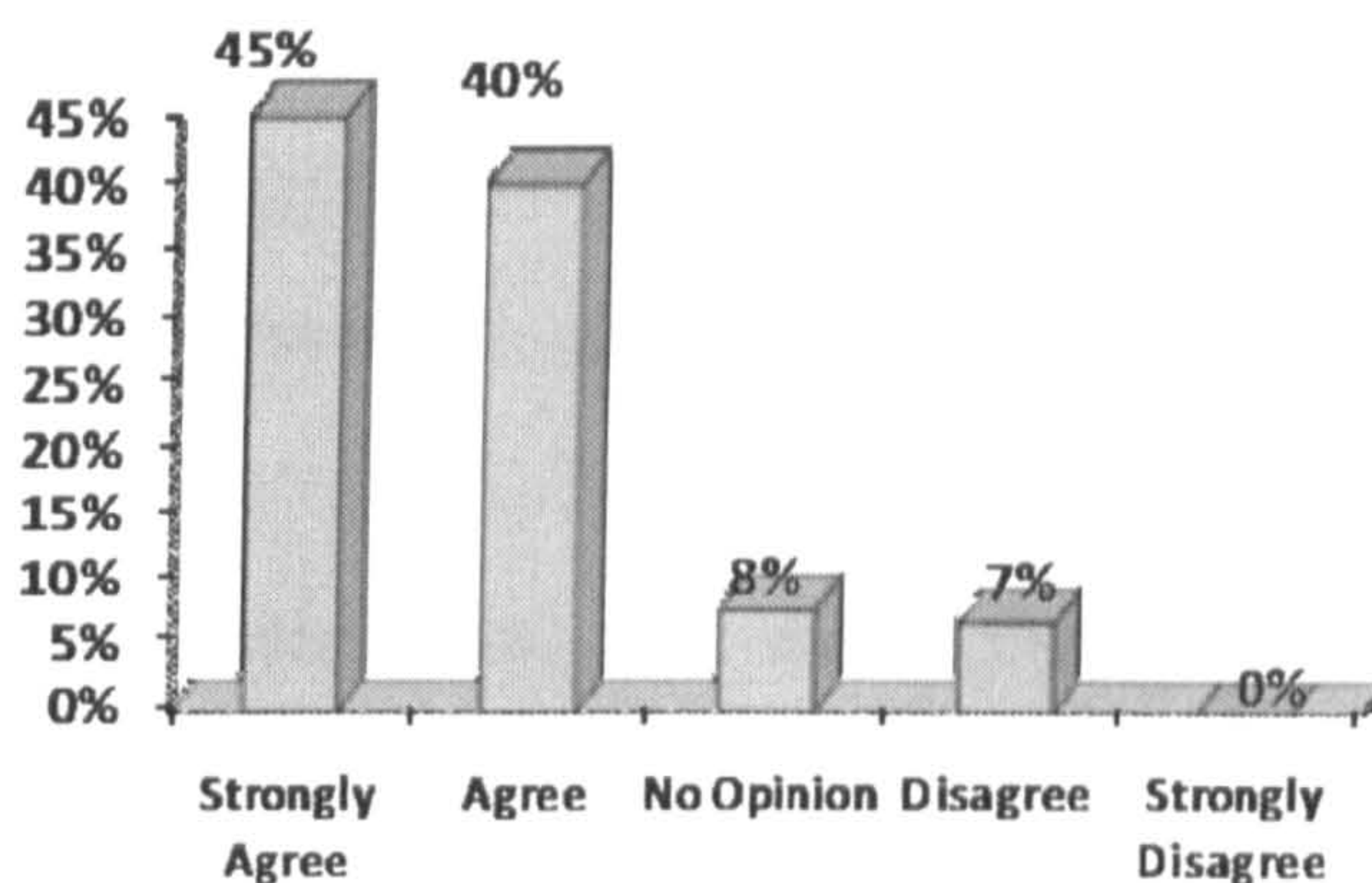


Figure 8.4: ‘Partnerships increase the financial resources available to individual partners’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

Survey Respondent No. 48 (third sector) also stated that “Some wish to be partners but do not always have the capacity to undertake specific roles within the partnership”. This point was supported by Interviewee No. 4 (public sector), who said that “The resources needed for project managing a partnership are often underestimated by funders. It is complex and time consuming, and if misjudged can impact upon the partnerships’ ability to deliver”. The point made by Interviewee No. 4 regarding under-estimation by funders was, however, contended by some MTPN actors, who argued that it is the responsibility of the funding applicant to properly budget for office cost. Although this is a reasonable assertion, I explored this point further through survey analysis and discussions with five funders. Survey Respondent No. 27 (third sector) stated “Although working in partnership is not the easy option and can take more time and resources, more often than not the results are on balance more positive in my experience of partnership-working”. Survey Respondent No. 13 (third sector) also said that; “If sufficient resources, appropriately trained staff and formal procedures are in place, then partnerships should deliver accordingly”. Both of these responses provided positive feedback

regarding the benefits and resource implications of partnership-working. Each of the funders that I interviewed provided different responses to my question:

'Do you feel that a funder should fund an actor's core project management costs?'

The following responses were received:

Funder 1. "Of course. We assume that project management costs, including the monitoring and review of milestones, aims, objectives and expenditure, are included in the grant application. It does not make sense to leave them out".

Funder 2. "No. We like to feel that the grant applicant is contributing something to the project, otherwise, we end up funding a series of stand-alone projects that may well have been created by an organisation with the intention of contributing to their core activities instead of focusing on stated project aims and objectives".

Funder 3. "Yes, but we set a limit of 10% of the funds requested".

Funder 4. "We allow for up to 10% of the grant to be used for core office costs. This includes periodical monitoring and review, plus writing up the end of project report".

Funder 5. "Yes, we provide up to 10%, but experience suggests organisations often use the 10% for other purposes and then struggle to meet reporting commitments".

With the exception of Funder 2, each funder allowed for project management costs. After merging this data with findings from the survey and action research, I concluded that these new funding streams do allow for project management costs, and that the issues raised by some actors resulted from their own operational efficiencies. It is important, however, not to confuse the allocation of project management funding with the wider issue of funding made available to the sector that was discussed in Section 5.3, which I have argued still remains a major constraint on the environmental sector. This study has, however, collected a rich set of

data regarding environmental partnership funding, with the above points made by various actors from across all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum. It has concluded that environmental partnerships bring new funding opportunities to what is otherwise an increasingly under-funded and competitive⁸⁷ sector.

To meet these challenges, new operational frameworks and more flexible accountability models are constantly sought by MTPN actors with varying degrees of success. When identified, I support (Goodwin's (1998:6) argument that they will 'mobilise the synergies between public and private funding and of a development policy based on partnership and co-operation between all levels'. Attempts to address these complex governance problems, Pearce and Mawson (2003) argued, have often foundered on systems based on function and hierarchy rather than territory, with inadequate resources, multiple funding streams, the top-slicing of local authority budgets, limited timescales and rigid monitoring procedures all hindering efforts. Further, potential synergies with local stakeholders are not exploited, with partnerships remaining dominated by lead (often state) organisations, leaving community organisations limited by lack of experience and resources.

8.4 State-Inclusive Environmental Partnerships

Although many environmental partnerships rely on voluntary support and public help, the state remains a powerful player, with regional government offices such as the South West Regional Development Agency retaining responsibility for obtaining and monitoring state funding (Yarwood, 2002). Findings suggest that these state actors are seeking to retain influence and control beyond merely due diligence and management of the public funds for which they are responsible (see Section 7.3 Managerial Technologies), whilst also accessing

⁸⁷ Competitive in this context means the competition between actors for the allocation of funds.

new funding streams originally created for the benefit of the third sector⁸⁸. Survey Respondent No. 29 (a QUANGO) highlighted this shift by state actors towards previously third sector-exclusive funding streams; “We are often able to make our limited resources go much further in partnership projects. We have external funding officers who are able to suggest sources of private or grant funding”. Survey Respondent No. 23 (from the public sector), commented that “Working with the volunteer sector particularly allows us to access funding streams that are not open to local authorities for work on nature conservation areas”. Survey Respondent No. 28 (also from the public sector) stated that partnerships “Provide credibility and status which in turn may open doors to other funding sources”.

I explored these comments further at interview. Interviewee No. 18 (private sector) pointed out that this shift by some public sector actors was a recent one, when commenting that “Local authorities have been slow to understand the principles of partnerships but have slowly come to realise the possibilities for synergy and new opportunities”. Interviewee No. 4 (public sector), also stressed that this is becoming the norm and that “Working with environmental sector trusts opens up funding streams that would not normally be available to a local authority, and thus provides resources for delivering corporate aims when delivered in partnership”. Interviewee No. 8 (a QUANGO employee) discussed how his organisation “...is involved in numerous Lottery-funded projects with various third sector partners. We never used to apply for these funds, but now find that they make a significant contribution to our office overheads, as well as enabling us to keep control of the project”. This statement also highlights how state actors seek to directly influence ‘community’ projects.

With the state engaging in an increasing number of environmental partnerships to access additional funding, data highlighted how state actors may also seek to dominate partnerships and become partnership principals (see Section 7.2.2). The MTPN provided numerous cases of

⁸⁸ The OPEP case study (see Section 5.3.1) presents an example of a state actor (HMP Dartmoor) partnering with Moor Trees to access new funding streams, including the Learning and Skills Council and various charitable trusts.

state actors taking a position of power in partnerships that are funded by programmes aimed at supporting the third sector (see, for example, Section 6.2.2 regarding the Natural England Access to Nature programme). Survey Respondent No. 60 (third sector) commented that “We do not have the time to work with fully paid government organisations”. This suggests varying capacity and resources available between state and non-state actors, and that the underfunding of environmental partnerships primarily impacts on the very community actors with whom the state seeks to engage.

Some commentators, however, suggest that the voluntary effort and active citizenship alluded to by Survey Respondent No. 60 are necessary to compensate for the withdrawal of state provision of services and are a central pillar of sustainable development (see, for example, Kearns, 1992; Murdoch, 1997; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Sampford, 2002; and Stoker, 1998). Voluntary effort is indeed a core component of many third sector programmes, but I concur with Edwards *et al.* (2001), who argued that despite the state seeking to engage a broad range of stakeholders in partnerships, partnership-working does not result automatically in ‘real’ participation and inclusion, especially when engagement is not constant and at best voluntary. These data suggest, therefore, a bias towards the state domination of partnerships.

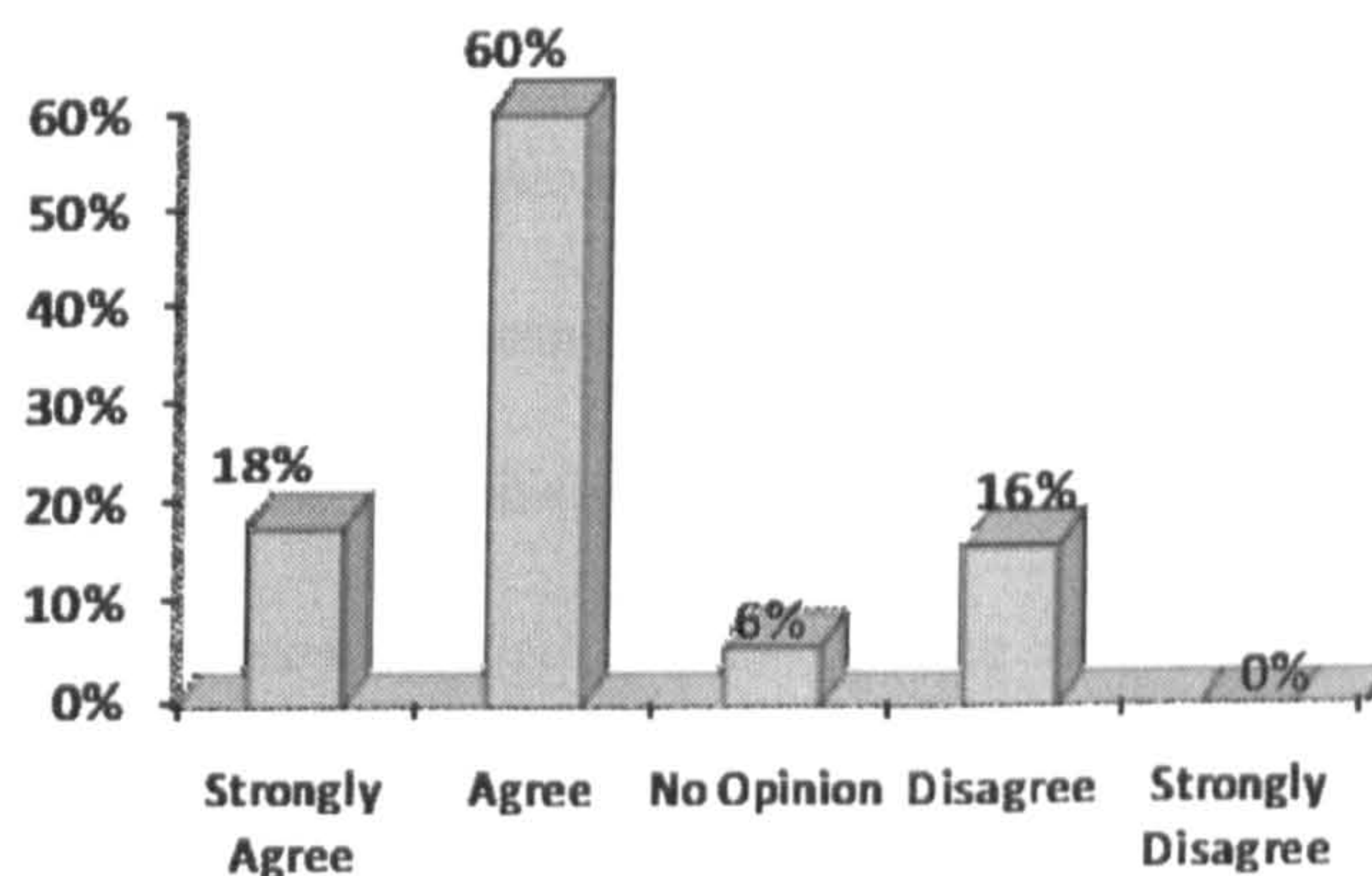


Figure 8.5: ‘Partnerships can be dominated by one or a few organisations’

Source: Author’s Questionnaire

This potential bias in power structures was highlighted by 78% (see Figure 8.5) of survey respondents agreeing that partnerships can be dominated by one or a few organisations. Survey Respondent No. 29 (QUANGO) highlighted how "...a lead individual can sometimes over-rule the views of partners, pursuing a course of action that not everybody agrees with". Survey Respondent No. 40 (from the third sector) commented that "Domination by a few organisations may be a problem in some partnerships. However, these will not be the successful ones and miss the point of partnership work". Although this data did not identify state actors as being the dominant ones, other data collected from the MTPN strongly suggest that this is the case. Domination by state actors is an issue to be explored further, both theoretically and empirically. Both Yarwood (2002) and Shortall (2004) argue that the power attributed to members at each level may vary in form, and that there are power struggles within partnerships. An example from within the MTPN is OPAL (see more detailed analysis in Section 8.5).

OPAL was created by Imperial College, which also led the writing of the funding bid, though with significant input from certain partners, including Moor Trees. As such, Imperial assumed the lead on all strategic, financial and operational issues. In part, this is due to its control over finances as the grant recipient, though its significant existing resources also play a role in their domination of the partnership. With reference to the comment by Survey Respondent No. 60 above, this dominance was arguably borne out of the community partners' lack of time and resources to attend meetings where decisions are made. I suggest that parallels can be drawn with state-dominated environmental partnerships, where actors such as local councils and QUANGOs are similarly resourced to a greater extent and to the same end. This was also argued by Survey Respondent No. 30 (from the third sector):

“In my experience of over 30 years of community and environmental projects, partnerships are usually led by a dominant organisation that commands most of the budget and influence over the projects. Community partners on government-led project are often relegated to a second tier - almost a token presence to demonstrate engagement by government with the Community and Voluntary Service. Cross-sector partnerships involving the Voluntary Community sector are often token unless there is an equal responsibility for delivery and a fair sharing out of funds”.

It is, therefore, evident that actors bring different resources to partnerships. Lowndes and Sullivan (2004) also argue that it is often a problem for citizens to get their voices heard alongside state actors ‘possessing superior technical knowledge, confidence and negotiating skills’ (see also Balloch and Taylor, 2001). It has been suggested that this community involvement is merely tokenistic as part of the community involvement agenda. In addition to the above statement from Survey Respondent No. 30, Survey Respondent No. 37 (QUANGO) said that “Most government departments are obsessed with getting evidence of partnership-working whether it brings any benefit or not”. So if partnerships are to be more than tokenistic, well-resourced organisations need to act to address the challenges that these ‘filters’ present (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002, see also Section 7.3.1 Checks and Balances).

If environmental partnership power structures can be constructed to provide an equitable and sustainable model, then they can provide third sector actors with a powerful tool to exert influence over the traditionally state-exclusive activity of EPPP formulation (as opposed to the typically community-based activity of delivery). It can also benefit advocacy groups wishing to reach new audiences (88% of survey respondents agreed with this). However, data suggest that the challenge often lies in resourcing the third sector to interact on an equitable basis with otherwise dominant actors. The next section highlights these, amongst other, challenges, and considers the benefits of partnership-working through the lens of the OPAL partnership.

8.5 CASE STUDY: The Moor Trees / OPen Air Laboratories (OPAL) Partnership

This section explores OPAL as a case study from within the MTPN. OPAL is an example of a multi-actor, cross-sector environmental partnership that includes actors from across all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum. My embeddedness within the network enabled action research, regular actor observation and interviews with OPAL members. Thus, it provided this study with an in-depth insight into the intricacies of the partnership-working carried out in and around this complex partnership. OPAL further provided an example of how the state (via the Big Lottery Fund) funded a project that was formulated primarily by state actors for subsequent delivery, for the most part, by non-state partners. It shows how local knowledge and community involvement are critical in meeting OPAL's aims and objectives, and how this local approach fits with national and regional state objectives. The lessons taken from this partnership then contribute to the collation of the components of effective partnership-working discussed later in Section of 8.6.1 of this chapter.

8.5.1 OPAL Overview

OPAL is a national consortium of environmental actors funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces Programme. The Big Lottery Fund is a state actor, having been officially established by Parliament in 2006. OPAL aims to celebrate biodiversity, environmental quality and people's engagement with nature by inspiring and supporting communities to explore study, enjoy and protect their local environment by working with leading scientists. The project started in October 2007 with an £11.7m grant from the Lottery's Changing Spaces Programme. OPAL's lead partner is Imperial College (London), which created the original project concept and led the funding bid. It works through, amongst others, nine universities around the UK (Section 8.5.5 analyses these partners further), including the University of Plymouth. Moor Trees has been involved in the project from the outset as the Community

Delivery Partner (CDP), including input by myself (as Director of Moor Trees) on the funding bid. Moor Trees is responsible for the community involvement aspect of OPAL by engaging its own network of volunteers and community groups with the University of Plymouth (the regional partner for OPAL) to meet OPAL targets and milestones (see Section 8.5.3 for detailed analysis of community involvement and beneficiary engagement). OPAL's focus on community involvement and the subsequent creation of the CDP network was for two reasons; (i) to run projects based on the needs and priorities of the local communities; and (ii) to access the local knowledge on offer. Local knowledge was core to the partnership's aims and objectives from the outset, with Dr Michael Dixon⁸⁹ (Director of the Natural History Museum) stating in an OPAL press release that:

“We urgently need to know more about the quality of our local environments. OPAL will provide the training, practical experience, tools and support needed for communities to record the plants, animals and fungi in their local environments. Communities will set up sites, or 'laboratories', where they will learn about their environment. Laboratories could be anything from a window box growing a single plant to a sports field from where soil samples are taken. Information collected will be shared via an interactive website, and will help build a picture of the quality and biodiversity of local areas. Communities will be empowered to play a major role in the assessment and monitoring of local water, soil and air quality which in turn will raise awareness of wider environmental issues such as climate change and how all these aspects are related to the health and well-being of society. If we are to take full advantage of the opportunities for improving the quality of life offered by scientific knowledge and discovery, it is crucial that we bring scientists and the public closer together to explore issues such as the quality of local environment”.

Source: OPAL Press Release supplied via Moor Trees (Date Unknown).

⁸⁹ This statement is in the public domain.

As a CDP, Moor Trees has received new resources and funding from OPAL to assist in its community work and in the delivery of OPAL objectives. This includes the employment of a full-time Community Scientist by the University of Plymouth using OPAL funds drawn down from Imperial College. Line management is carried out by the university, but the scientist is based in the Moor Trees office. OPAL has also provided a fully-expensed 'people carrier' (8-seater) vehicle for use primarily by the Community Scientist, but also made available to Moor Trees members of staff. Additional funding is provided to cover core office costs, including project management, monitoring and review (this brings further empirical focus to the discussion of Section 8.3.4). Further, indirect benefits were gained through the funding of a PhD Student at the University of Plymouth, plus the provision of scientific and communications resources in the form of academic partner expertise and partnering with the Natural History Museum Communications Department (see Section 8.5.6 for further analysis of these benefits and the subsequent challenges presented). As per the earlier discussion in Section 8.3.4, this provision of additional core funding was critical to Moor Trees accepting the invitation to join the partnership, as it otherwise had no spare capacity to conduct the monitoring and review required by the funder.

8.5.2 OPAL Aims and Objectives

OPAL adopted the partnership approach to work across multiple sites and enable interdisciplinary study. It acknowledged that partnering with CDPs, such as Moor Trees, was important for project legitimacy by aiming to engage with all members of the community. This included the creation of a hub for information, interaction, training and dialogue by collecting data from CDPs and local experts and offering resources from a range of cross-sector actors. The following stated objectives of the project include the creation of new, community-based partnerships (Objective 5, in particular, emphasises partnership-working):

- A change of lifestyle, inspiring people both to spend time outside and to contribute to improving biodiversity and wildlife habitats
- A new generation of nature lovers
- An exciting and innovative educational programme that can be accessed and enjoyed by all ages and abilities
- A much greater understanding of the state of the natural environment and its biodiversity, particularly in the most economically impoverished parts of England
- Stronger partnerships between the community, voluntary and statutory sectors

Source: OPAL Press Release

The desired outcomes for the five year project also include partnership-working, as well as building on the benefits of local knowledge (Outcome 5 emphasises partnership-working):

- Over 1 million people will have increased knowledge and awareness of the quality of open spaces around them through community engagement programmes and interactive websites. They will have a greater appreciation of special conservation sites and the importance of protecting our heritage and of the contribution individuals can make.
- OPAL will create a new generation of nature lovers, many drawn from sections of society currently under-represented in amateur natural history groups. Active membership of twenty amateur natural history societies will increase by 10%. People will be better able to safeguard their local environment for local residents, their children and future generations.
- OPAL will deliver an innovative educational programme for all ages, backgrounds and abilities. It will design and distribute 200,000 teaching packs, associated with the OPAL thematic programmes on biodiversity and bio-monitoring. Through new approaches to

learning, people will gain the opportunity to become active participants and the knowledge and confidence to enter into debates on environmental issues.

- Local people will be able to participate in projects to monitor the state of the natural environment and its biodiversity. OPAL will help some of the most disadvantaged communities to identify, quantify and highlight environmentally deprived spaces.
- Partnerships will increase between the community, voluntary and statutory sectors. Scientists at nine regional universities, with the help of specialist national centres, will build connections with those who have an aspiration or need to improve local environments. The portfolio will engage with over 500,000 people to encourage a greater sense of ownership of their local environment.

Source: OPAL Press Release received by Moor Trees⁹⁰

Local community empowerment was also high on the OPAL agenda, with Dr Dixon adding:

“We believe that through Changing Spaces and the Open Air Laboratories Network (OPAL) programmes we will pave the way for communities to share inspiring ideas and change the way they think about and use the spaces around them. We urgently need to know more about the quality of our local environments, but we are very aware that there are not enough trained people, nor sufficient funds to carry out this urgent and enormous task. We believe that we can achieve this through Changing Spaces funding and the OPAL projects. OPAL will enable local communities to collect information which will be used to produce the first community-led ‘State of the Environment’ Report. OPAL will provide the training, practical experience, tools and support needed for communities to record the plants, animals and fungi in their local environments. These communities will be empowered to play a major role in the assessment and monitoring of local water, soil and air quality which in turn will raise awareness of wider

⁹⁰ This information is in the public domain.

environmental issues such as climate change and how all these aspects are related to the health and well-being of society”.

Source: OPAL Press Release supplied via Moor Trees (Date Unknown).

The above statement from Dr Dixon highlights how working with local people is central to the success of the project and will both inform national objectives and facilitate grassroots change. But it goes further than purely suggesting that local knowledge and expertise will be utilised, it points out that OPAL will help further resource local experts and groups to share this knowledge with the wider community, as well as informing national initiatives, including climate change awareness-raising. This investment in local communities is by no means the norm in environmental partnerships, though I suggest later in this chapter that it is a component of effective partnership-working.

By using Moor Trees as the CDP for OPAL South West (via the University of Plymouth), OPAL gained access to a portfolio of community woodland and tree nursery locations in and around Dartmoor National Park, the Tamar Valley, the South Hams AONB and the cities of Plymouth, Exeter and Bristol. The wide range of locations (including ‘high moor’, broad-leaf woodland, improved grassland, riparian, estuarine, urban and a site bordering a Ministry of Defence nuclear facility) provided a range of results and an exciting diversity of reports. Moor Trees’ successful record of community involvement through volunteering and partnership-working enabled access to local communities.

8.5.3 Community Involvement and Beneficiary Engagement through OPAL

Moor Trees became OPAL South West’s CDP because of its community links, demonstrating how third sector partnerships can bring community involvement for the *delivery* of EPPP. To a lesser extent, Moor Trees was also involved in the *formulation* of OPAL via its involvement in

the management meetings preceding the funding application. This gave Moor Trees the opportunity to influence the structure of the OPAL programme to maximise benefit at the local level. However, it has been suggested by some participants in the project and bid planning stages that this (third sector) involvement was purely to demonstrate public participation for the benefit of the lottery, which itself is accountable to the state and also directed to address national socio-environmental aims and objectives (see 8.5.4 Strategic Fit with state policy).

Moor Trees' role as CDP was to introduce beneficiaries (local people) from a wide number of community groups linked into the charity as regular community volunteers. These included local and regional third sector partners such as BTCV and Groundwork, special needs groups, local conservation groups, refugees and asylum seekers, rehab groups, schools and colleges, young people training groups, and universities and colleges (staff as well as students) (see Appendix H for full list). These volunteer groups brought local knowledge and a network of data collectors to the partnership. In return, they received training in plant and animal identification, pollution monitoring techniques, sampling, and data presentation.

Local residents are also actively engaged to increase appreciation of their environment and how it can be protected. In the 12 months preceding the OPAL funding bid, Moor Trees delivered over 1,800 volunteer days with a focus on deprived communities and isolated groups. These figures were adopted as a baseline by OPAL for year one's target beneficiary numbers against which part of the funding bid was allocated. This meant that a strict accountability mechanism was required, with a beneficiary tracking spreadsheet required to be completed by all CDPs on a monthly basis (see Appendix I). As a result of Moor Trees involvement in the preparation of the funding bid, an office budget was also allocated to Moor Trees to meet this reporting requirement.

8.5.4 Strategic Fit with State Policy

As discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.1), it has been suggested by some that the autonomy of state-funded partnerships can be restricted to addressing wider national objectives due to being under-pinned by state structures, thus leaving little or no room for response to local need (Greer, 2001; Jessop, 1997; MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999; Skelcher *et al.*, 1997; Taylor, 2002). The OPAL partnership was analysed to substantiate similar claims made by MTPN fringe actors, with data suggesting that strategic fit with national and regional state objectives was also a priority in the funding decision-making process. The following PPP were referenced by OPAL in its funding bid (see Appendix J for further details):

Plan, Policy or Programme	Lead State Actor
Outdoors For All	Natural England
Opportunity for All 2009 Strategy Document	Department for Work and Pensions
Regional Sustainable Development Framework	Government Office for the South West
Index of Multiple Deprivation	Communities and Local Government
Regional Spatial Strategy	Government Office for the South West
Dartmoor National Park Local Biodiversity Action Plan	Dartmoor National Park Authority
Local Development Framework (Core Strategy)	Plymouth City Council
Green Space Strategy (2008-2023)	Plymouth City Council
South West Strategic Infrastructure Partnership	Government Office for the South West

Table 8.1: OPAL Funding Bid References to State PPP

Examples of Moor Trees' 'fit' included the following:

- Two main volunteer centres (35% of its work) are based in (i) Keyham, Plymouth, classified IMD 'Urban Worst 5%' and (ii) Diptford, South Hams, classified IMD 'Rural Worst 5%'.
- Work carried out across various 'Rural Worst 5% to 10%' locations in and around Dartmoor National Park.

- Moor Trees is the single largest contributor to the woodland creation targets of the Dartmoor Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Work carried out in Plymouth deemed as 'Not accessible green space or linear access'.
- OPAL objectives are in keeping with the Plymouth City Local Development Framework – Core Strategy, in particular with policies CS18 and CS19 aims (3) 'Maintaining a citywide network of local wildlife sites and wildlife corridors, links and stepping stones between areas of natural green space' and (6) 'Supporting wildlife enhancements which contribute to the restoration targets set out in national, regional and local Biodiversity Action Plans' (Plymouth City Council, 2008). The City Council Local Development Framework aims to provide Plymouth's population with access to natural greenscape within 300 metres of their home, and to facilitate the designation of 100 hectares of new Local Nature Reserve by 2016. A baseline flora survey of Plymouth nature reserves was carried out in 1990 by Dr Andrew Stevens, then a member of University of Plymouth staff.

PRIORITY GROUPS

- Works with Black and Minority Ethnic groups (referred to as 'BMEs'), people with disabilities and ill health, refugees and asylum seekers.
- Keyham (Plymouth) site located in an area with the 'Highest 10% of health deprivation' through lack of access to the natural environment.

In line with the aims of the Department of Work and Pension's 'Opportunity for All' (2006) report, Moor Trees provides:

- young people from deprived areas with improved education and training opportunities
- improved welfare through greater employability resulting from education, training and volunteering work
- social capital and cohesion through inter- and intra-community group networking

- active and fulfilling practical conservation opportunities to retired people
- offenders with accredited land-based education and training to reduce reoffending.

On speaking with the BLF representative (who wished to remain anonymous) it became apparent that the above detail proved crucial in the success of the funding bid. This supported my assertion that 'local' projects targeting national objectives and also providing opportunities for further research as discussed in the next chapter.

8.5.5 OPAL Partners

OPAL's partnership network includes a diverse range of actors from across all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum. However, data suggested that the network is stratified into two levels; Level 1 'Main Partners'; and Level 2 'Community Delivery Partners'. Level one comprises only one third sector organisation, the rest are state or academic institutions (which are also state-funded entities). This was because OPAL's partnership approach was two-tiered. Third sector CDPs were only formally engaged after the funding had been agreed, despite their contributions towards community consultations and provision of local data proving an essential component in the successful bid. Distribution of the funding awarded was done on a tiered basis, with Imperial College as the main recipient who awarded funds to main partners, who then awarded funds to CDPs. This resulted in two amounts of top-slicing prior to the partners directly responsible for programme delivery receiving funding, plus a continuation of the complex governance problems highlighted earlier in this chapter by Pearce and Mawson (2003), i.e. the focus on function and hierarchy rather than territory, inadequate resources, multiple funding streams, top-slicing, limited timescales and rigid monitoring procedures. This approach by OPAL provided a valuable empirical focus when researching the components required for effective partnership-working, with a number of lessons learnt.

8.5.6 Lessons from the OPAL Partnership

The OPAL partnership provides an example of a multi-actor, cross-sector partnership situated within the MTPN, with Section 8.5.4 highlighting how OPAL's outputs contribute to the delivery of state-formulated EPPP. Indeed, identifying this synergy was an important component of the funding bid and arguably proved crucial in the final approval awarded by the Big Lottery Fund. OPAL further provided an empirical focus regarding the three components of effective partnership-working identified by this research - responsibility, legitimacy and accountability. It demonstrated how the state has devolved responsibility for the delivery of EPPP (as highlighted in Section 8.5.4) to a partnership that includes both state (the Environment Agency is lead consultant) and non-state actors. Without the latter, lottery funding would not have been made available. Legitimacy for the partnership was also sought (and arguably received) through extensive community consultation via third sector actors such as Moor Trees. This included questionnaires, group visits, and informal discussions during Moor Trees volunteering days.

Finally, OPAL included a number of accountability mechanisms imposed by the Changing Spaces programme and constructed by the funder to monitor and review the performance of the project. They stipulated a variety of monthly, quarterly and annual reports. These accounting procedures are robust and require significant detail, with the lead partner (Imperial College) having secured sufficient funding from the Lottery to resource both itself and OPAL partners to meet this requirement. OPAL provided a rich set of data enabling analysis of how these components of effective partnership-working both interact and work in parallel with each other. Findings suggest that OPAL provides an example of a successful multi-actor cross sector partnership. As such, I have taken a number of lessons from the network.

Extensive stakeholder consultation resulted in a popular and successful programme.

The Changing Spaces programme stipulated a high degree of community involvement in project formulation and planning. This is argued by, amongst others, Pearce and Mawson (2003), Raco (2006) and Thompson (2005) as a key component of environmental governance. This identified local need, benefited from local knowledge and increased the likelihood of grassroots uptake at the delivery stage. Perhaps crucially, OPAL also continued this community involvement after the funding had been awarded and through to the delivery stages. Data collected from the MTPN suggests that this is by no means normative behaviour for the lead actors in multi-actor partnerships, with community involvement often only engaged in by the funding applicant in the planning stage for funder benefit, with no continuation after funding is awarded (Moor Trees has contributed to a number of funding proposals but was excluded during project delivery, thus disenfranchising its stakeholders). This does, however, suggest a contention with the wider findings of this research i.e. that non-state actors are primarily involved in EPPP delivery, as opposed to formulation.

The provision of funding to partners enabled effective monitoring and review.

After extensive negotiation by Moor Trees, the University of Plymouth (as the OPAL South West main partner) agreed funding to Moor Trees' office costs of £4,500 p.a. This funding enabled Moor Trees, as an OPAL Community Delivery Partner, to allocate staff time to the monitoring and review processes required by OPAL.

Investment in local communities through the provision of training, education, learning materials, event promotion and transportation improved project delivery through the provision of a rich variety and high quality of locally-sourced data.

The provision of OPAL learning packs, well-funded and resourced events, and an OPAL 'people carrier' vehicle, has resulted in high numbers of attendees at OPAL events.

Inter-partner communications and branding have on occasion been poor, resulting in some problems regarding awareness-raising and promotion of events and developments

Effective communication is important for good governance (Evans, 2004). Communication between a large number of organisations for national and regional events has proven challenging. This has resulted in occasional poor attendance at events, lack of partner branding on printed and electronic materials, and lack of representation at events. These issues are important for many partners, especially smaller actors who benefit greatly from exposure at large events through membership and volunteer recruitment opportunities.

The operational interface between large and small partners has proven challenging, especially concerning the management of the OPAL Community Scientist, i.e. confused management structure and management of expectations.

The power structures discussed in 7.2 and throughout this chapter have occasionally proven problematic during the management of the OPAL Community Scientist embedded at Moor Trees. This was due to the tensions caused by the employment of the Community Scientist by the larger University of Plymouth, whilst day-to-day management was carried out by the smaller partner (Moor Trees). This challenge was overcome by the reinforcement of a robust job description.

The utilisation of shared resources needs to be agreed in advance and working arrangements confirmed. The use of the OPAL vehicle, in particular, proved problematic due to conflict between OPAL and Moor Trees staff (the vehicle was available for wider Moor Trees use).

Stoker and Young (1993) argue that 'pooling of resources' is a factor of partnership sustainability (see also Edwards *et al.*, 2000, 2001; Jordan *et al.*, 2003). However, OPAL has proven that whilst this is, in part, correct, it also provides challenges regarding the subsequent allocation of these resources.

Taking the above and other experiences from the MTPN into consideration, the next section presents a potential delivery framework for effective partnership-working.

8.6 Towards an Effective Delivery Framework?

The multi-faceted and complex nature of the natural environment means that there is no one formulaic approach to environmental partnership-working that can be replicated to create a general framework. However, lessons can be learnt from the MTPN, where partnerships have adopted differing approaches with varying degrees of success. What is clear, however, is the intrinsic link between partnership-working and governance, whereby it is acknowledged that environmental projects require working *with* people as opposed to *for* them. As such, argued Edwards *et al.* (2000), there are inevitably trade-offs in terms of independence, power and central control in developing and then successfully maintaining these relationships. This suggests that when attempting to create an environmental partnership-working framework one must consider the complexities of state and non-state actors working together, i.e. the state benefits from greater resources and professionalism but is challenged by the inertia of bureaucracy, and non-state actors can be poorly resourced but bring benefit from their dynamic approach, local context and knowledge.

Findings suggested that the inclusion of non-state actors ('community involvement') is a component, outcome and indicator of effective partnership-working. Achieving the three together demonstrates a sustainable and effective partnership, and by using this as a central aim, a delivery model can be developed to operationalise the environmental governance concept. However, community involvement as a component may in reality bring limited engagement, i.e. involvement in partnership formulation, but not necessarily delivery. Third sector actors, for example, are frequently consulted to provide evidence of local need to support a funding bid, but are not always included as delivery partners if / when funding is

secured and subsequently disbursed. Whilst it is not realistic to expect that every community consultee becomes a delivery partner, a partnership model should be developed where each actor will benefit either directly or indirectly. Thus, community involvement acts as an indicator of environmental partnership-working, enabling commentators to assess the success of the partnership approach. As this research has shown, however, bridging the implementation gap (moving from 'intent to action') is one of the main challenges facing environmental partnerships (Greer, 2001; Jordan, 2002; Lowndes *et al.*, 1997:334).

The next section draws on the conclusions drawn from the analyses of three critical areas of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability, plus experiences from the MTPN.

8.6.1 Components of an Effective Partnership-Working Model

A number of lessons have been learnt from this study. Firstly, *EPPP democratic legitimacy* should be secured via community consultation, with stakeholder engagement being designed into a project to avoid the assumption that the engagement with a certain number of non-state actors automatically secures legitimacy (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). This can be done via focus groups, open community meetings, surveys and questionnaires. Care should also be taken to consult the local community during the *EPPP formulation process*. As highlighted by OPAL, stakeholder engagement in the formulation stage improves project uptake when the project is being delivered. Care should also be taken to ensure representation from across the Policy Implementation Continuum. Conceptualised throughout this thesis as 'state' and 'non-state', actors are further stratified within this model to include government, QUANGO, third sector and private sector. Findings have concluded that inclusion of actors from all four levels contribute to *EPPP* success for reasons of legitimacy, new funding opportunities, professional expertise and local knowledge (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Dryzek, 2001; Goodwin, 1998; Imrie and Raco, 1999; Stoker, 1998 and 2006). Although this consultation is key, it is important to avoid

'consultation overload' and 'participation fatigue'. There is a danger that problems may be compounded by additional, standardised, layers of 'partnership' activity. It was widely acknowledged by MTPN actors that partnership membership can prove to be a significant drain on resources, with meetings and events often blurring their focus of project delivery. A clear and concise strategy for partner and stakeholder communication and engagement is therefore beneficial.

The equitable distribution of funding and allocation of project resources (i.e. transport, IT, office space and equipment, tools and equipment, etc) was also highlighted by mainly non-state actors. Findings, mainly through direct consultation, suggest that opportunities should be presented to non-state actors to play a leading role in the funding process i.e. through the co-writing of funding applications. As demonstrated by OPAL, the inclusion of third sector actors in the financial development stage of a project can ensure fair allocation of resources in line with operational responsibilities, i.e. the allocation to Moor trees of an annual office budget. This also leads to new investment in community partners with potentially wider benefits to non-project specific activities (see also Section 8.5.2). Moor Trees, for example, also negotiated use of the OPAL minibus for non-OPAL activities when not being used for OPAL work.

Flexibility and variability of implementation strategy - it is important to avoid the over-regulation of partnership activity in order to protect adaptation to local conditions and to create room for innovation (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). Davies (2002:197) also argued that partnerships need to retain a degree of flexibility to 'accommodate unthought-of of possibilities'.

The transparency of internal management practices maintains stakeholder support as well as advancing legitimacy claims (Honders and Bruijn, 2008; Davidson and Lockwood, 2008;

Hemmati, 2002; Paavola, 2007; Savan *et al.*, 2004). Findings suggest that the adoption of a *holistic as opposed to a hierarchical accountability structure* increases outputs and the sustainability of outcomes (see Section 7.4), i.e. a more qualitative approach favoured by non-state funders, in contrast to the quantitative audit culture of most state programmes. This was conceptualised by Dixon *et al.* (2006) as 'downward accountability' to beneficiaries and 'upward accountability' to the state.

There should be *defined roles and responsibilities, clear administration and accounting procedures*, including mutual agreement between state and non-state actors regarding managerial technologies (see Section 7.3) (Castree, 2003; Jepson, 2002; Mackinnon, 2000; Ward and McNicholas, 1998). Inter-sector collaborations present new opportunities as well as threats of competition amongst members (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). Partnerships are unlikely to deliver enhanced public participation unless there is a specific value commitment. A strong vision, with common and clear understanding of roles and responsibilities is required. A clear internal and external communications strategy is required to underpin this.

Defined timescales. Lowndes and Skelcher (1998:320) argue that partnerships go through a four stage life cycle; (1) Pre-partnership collaboration; (2) creation and consolidation; (3) programme delivery, and (4) Termination or succession. Interview and survey feedback has also strongly suggested that partnerships need to have a beginning and end. It has also been argued that partnerships have a natural life and that problems can occur when they are continued beyond it so an exit strategy should also be created.

Power Structures. An equitable distribution of operational responsibilities in line with funding allocation is important, with open access to resources and decision-making processes and equal opportunity for effective participation by all.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed partnership-working in the context of the MTPN. Taking lessons learnt from the OPAL partnership, it has sought to implement the conceptual environmental partnership-working model (see Figure 4.1) through the development of a checklist to move from theory into practice. Concurring with Westholm (1999), data has also shown that tri-sectoral representation in partnerships, where public, private and voluntary actors work together, is a fundamental defining feature of partnerships. Partnerships between these groups are also an important means of delivering action on the ground, developing new ideas and providing innovative solutions (HM Government, 2005). Partnership-working has further shown the advantages of local knowledge and contextualisation, community involvement in both EPPP formulation and delivery, and increased funding opportunities. However, these opportunities are also subject to the threats and challenges of power structures, under-resourcing and inter-actor communications (Franks and McGloin, 2006; Pearce and Mawson, 2003; Sampford, 2002; Summerville *et al.*, 2008). Recommendations have been made in the environmental partnership-working checklist to overcome the above challenges.

The funding of partnerships, in particular, received much analysis and discussions, with data suggesting that new opportunities via the National Lottery, European and government programmes have arisen to promote multi-actor, cross-sector collaborations. This encouragement of state / non-state partnerships has, however, become subject to a degree of acrimony by non-state actors, where it has been pointed out that the state is joining environmental partnerships to leverage these new funds (intended for the third sector) to subsidise their own budget-restricted EPPP:

The Countryside Commission (along with English Nature) has been unusually successful in securing Lottery funding to promote its own general objectives (Bishop *et al.* 2000, in Curry,

2001:567). The government, however, contends that it is strongly committed to creating a framework in which the sector can continue to flourish, be strong and independent, and that:

The Voluntary and Community Sector continues to make a significant contribution to service delivery and strengthening communities. It is a key partner in delivering government policies (HM Treasury, 2002:5).

As argued by Edwards *et al.* (2001), the aim, size, scale, power, balance, funding and duration of partnerships vary considerably, but commentators have suggested that they play increasingly important roles within policy delivery and the governance of the UK (Goodwin, 1998; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998). Thus, it appears to be a government priority to make partnership-working a key EPPP implementation mechanism through the provision of start-up funding for new partnerships, and working to break down policy barriers to partnership activity (HM Government, 2005). What remains, however, is the adoption of an effective partnership-working model that will bring equitable distribution of resources across the Policy Implementation Continuum to enable non-state actors to *accept* the state's devolved responsibility, to *acquire* stakeholder legitimacy and to provide sufficient levels of accountability whilst retaining the innovation and dynamism opportunities that partnership-working can create.

Partnership-working and environmental governance continue to be, for the most part, studied in isolation from each other by policy makers and academics (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Darlow and Newby, 1997; Goodwin, 1998; Hastings, 1996; Jessop, 1998; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1993; Healy, 1992; Huxham, 1996; Jessop, 1998, 2002, 2005; Mackinnon, 2002; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1998). This thesis has sought to fuse the two concepts to further the understanding of the partnership approach as a delivery framework for environmental governance. It has conceptualised partnership-working as a subset of governance where the

state is engaging in new partnerships with non-state actors to formulate and deliver EPPP. Further conceptualisation through firstly the Policy Implementation Continuum (an adaptation of Wilson *et al.*'s (1999) EU Policy Implementation Adoption model) and, secondly, the Effective Partnership-Working model, have identified responsibility, legitimacy and accountability as key components of an effective partnership. Although each of these issues has independently received some attention by academics to date, little or no work has been carried out in the context of environmental partnership-working.

It has also been noted that although scholars have provided much theoretical discussion regarding environmental partnership-working, comparatively little empirical focus has been given to the local and other non-state actor partnership which this thesis identified as important implementers of EPPP. To address this gap within current policy research, this thesis explored the MTPN as its empirical focus, with my embeddedness producing a rich set of qualitative and quantitative data through a mixed methodology. The network included a range of government, QUANGO, third and private sector actors, representing all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum. Actor attitudes and behaviours towards partnership-working were analysed, contributing towards a better understanding of partnership-working, in particular highlighting the continued prominence of the state in partnership-led governance and the challenges of putting policy into practice (Eden, 2009). It also highlighted how the legitimacy of EPPP increases grassroots uptake (Ferretti, 2006) and, therefore, the robustness of the governance approach.

In this final part of the thesis, the empirical and theoretical analyses are drawn together. Conclusions and findings are summarised, ranging from the broad concept of environmental governance, to the narrower subset of partnership-working and finally the specific components of responsibility, legitimacy and accountability. Suggestions are then made for future research into environmental partnership-working.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Aims and Objectives

By focusing on Moor Trees and its partnership network as a case study for environmental partnership-working, this thesis has addressed a gap in partnership research studies, as well as providing an insight into the world of the street-level environmental actor. To achieve this, the research addressed four objectives, the key findings of which are now summarised in the following section.

9.2 Key Findings

Objective one: Using the MTPN as a case study, to analyse whether and to what extent the state is devolving responsibility and authority for environmental decision-making and the delivery of EPPP to the non-state, or grassroots, actor level through discourses of community responsibility, partnership-working and self-governing.

Analysis revealed the consistent theme of the challenge of operationalising state-formulated EPPP through non-state partnerships, and the lack of resources made available to these partnerships as a consistent restraint. The continued top-down approach of state-imposed managerial technologies and an audit culture that has restricted non-state actor flexibility and dynamism suggests that ideas governance heterarchies need to be challenged. Instead, the study suggests that the state (in the UK, at least) is retaining control and power by governing through communities, despite of the environmental governance concept suggesting that the state should replace direct intervention with community responsibility and self-governing through partnership-working.

Objective Two: *To assess if democratic legitimacy is lost through the inclusion of non-elected, non-state actors in the formulation and delivery of EPPP.*

Findings concluded that partnerships theoretically contribute to the democratic *legitimacy* of EPPP and, therefore good governance, but only if increased levels of stakeholder engagement are secured. However, it was argued that, in reality, community engagement in EPPP formulation can be lacking and unrepresentative, due to *selective representation* by a core group of non-state actors. It was concluded that the legitimisation of EPPP (through public participation) should be ‘designed-in’ and not ‘assumed-in’, and that the increasing complexity of multi-actor state / non-state partnerships can result in unclear decision structures and diminished accountability.

Objective Three: *To explore the financial and operational accountability framework(s) of the MTPN and to analyse the implications of quantitative and qualitative reporting mechanisms.*

Accountability from partnership actor(s) to stakeholder(s) emerged as the final step towards effective partnership-working. However, often complex accountability frameworks were considered by many MTPN actors to be a significant strain on resources, although they could also lead to improved support and actor commitment. The ‘Partnership Principal’ concept argued that (often state) donors can assume rights of authority over grantees through a top-down approach, as opposed to the proposed heterarchy of a governance system. Cases study analysis of the MTPN concluded that *hierarchical* accountability can lead to unsustainable resource implications, whilst *holistic* accountability can present a wider, more transparent and legitimacy-building form of accountability to stakeholders.

Objective Four: *To critically assess the Moor Trees Partnership Network to further the understanding of the practical issues that environmental partnerships must address in order to become effective delivery vehicles for EPPP.*

It was concluded that the local knowledge and contextualisation offered by state/non-state partnerships are an increasingly important means of delivering action on the ground, developing new ideas and providing innovative solutions, although they are threatened by the challenges of power structures, under-resourcing (especially the lack of funding) and inter-actor communications. It was further concluded that an effective partnership-working model is needed to enable non-state actors to *accept* the state's devolved responsibility, to *acquire* stakeholder legitimacy, and to provide sufficient levels of accountability whilst retaining the innovation and dynamism opportunities that partnership-working can create. A checklist was developed to provide the baseline for such a model.

9.3 Environmental Governance

The governance concept was widely studied in the 1990s, resulting in numerous conclusions regarding the shift from top-down 'government' to bottom-up 'governance', a 'changed order of rule', the greater inclusion of non-state actors, community involvement and the blurring of boundaries between state and non-state actors (Goodwin 1998; Jessop, 1998; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1993, 1997, 1998). In part, through the adoption of Foucault's ideas regarding governing through community, New Labour's Active Citizenship agenda of the late 1990s was subsequently set out in the Rural White Paper of 2000. Thus, the governance approach has become embedded in both academic and governmental discourse. More recently, environmental governance has been awarded an increasing profile due to climate change, sustainable development, and food and energy security, with the commodification of nature, in particular, receiving much attention in recent years (Higgins and

Lockie, 2002; Liverman 2004; Mackinnon, 2002; McCarthy, 2004, 2005; Sonnenfeld and Mol, 2002). As such, the mechanisms of environmental governance continue to evolve, with partnership-working appearing to be on the agenda of most actors within the Policy Implementation Continuum. For the purpose of this research, I contextualised governance to the environmental sector ('environmental governance') through the following definition:

The devolution of power and responsibility by the state to non-state actors for the formulation and delivery of environmental plans, policies and programmes

Source: Author

The aim of this definition was to compare the concept of governance with practicalities of the environmental sector and to highlight the devolution of power and responsibility. It is this devolution that provided the basis for the key findings of the thesis through its subsequent unpacking of the issues of *accepting responsibility, acquiring legitimacy and providing accountability*.

In the context of environmental partnerships, this research has found environmental governance to be an evolving construct, with its mechanisms continuing to 'evolve in response to new problems and the growing influence of neoliberalism' (Bailey, 2007:546). The market-based approach has been a recurring theme in this thesis, especially with the increased involvement by non-state actors in EPPP and the growing hybridity in the way that environmental problems are governed through devolution of responsibility to the (partly state-controlled) markets and individuals (Bailey and Maresh, 2009; Boonstra, 2006; Bumpus and Liverman, 2008; Jordan *et al.*, 2005; Mackinnon, 2002). As argued by Bakker (2005, 2009) and further supported through data collected from interaction with MTPN actors in this study, however, ideological differences run deep, with data also suggesting that free market environmentalism (or the commodification of nature) is at the same time disapproved of and

embraced by both state and non-state actors (see also Goldman, 1998; Liverman, 2004; McCarthy and Prudham, 2003).

It has also been widely argued that governance includes a blurring of the boundaries between state and non-state actors, where the state engages in a new, less hierarchical forms of relationship with non-state actors, blurring the distinction between 'the public' and 'the private' (see, for example, Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Goodwin, 1998; Jessop, 1998, 2002, 2005; Mackinnon, 2002; Murdoch, 1997; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1998; Winter, 2006). This study, however, contends that, instead of a withdrawal by, or decoupling of, the state regarding EPPP, there is actually a *thickening* of boundaries or deepening of involvement, whereby the state is instead embedding itself in previously marginalised stakeholder groups under the auspice of the bottom-up approach. This thickening could also be argued to be the state's efforts to maintain the reins of power whilst outwardly appearing to adopt a more devolved approach. Section 7.3 supported this argument through its findings regarding managerial technologies (see also Logan and Wekerle, 2008; Lockie, 2009; Mackinnon, 2000; Ward and McNicholas, 1998), whilst also finding parallels with the arguments of Rhodes (1996) and Stoker (1998) that the capacities of the state are limited but that its roles are changing from provider and controller to facilitator and enabler.

This thickening has parallels with Swyngedouw's (2004:25) argument regarding the rescaling of 'glocalisation', i.e. that there is a shift in the locus of control upwards to global scales and downwards to the scale of the individual or to local or regional configurations as part of a reorganisation of society. Findings suggest that the state retains an arm's length controlling interest in environmental governance, primarily through funding (i.e. AES and EWGS, see Section 4.3 and 4.4), though also through legislation i.e. statutory designations. This thickening of the state would perhaps be contended by some who argue that society is actually experiencing a 'hollowing out' or 'rolling back' of the state through a redistribution of

functions to non-state actors (Jepson, 2005; Jessop, 1991, 1998; MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999; Yarwood, 2002; see also Mackinnon, 2000; and Raco and Imrie, 2000 regarding 'governing from a distance'). The challenge, therefore, is to distinguish between the state-inclusive and state-exempt paradigm shift of environmental governance. If the former, then it could be argued that instead of a 'blurring', the environmental sector is indeed experiencing a 'thickening' or 'dove-tailing' of state control that challenges state rhetoric regarding new bottom-up approach of governance and apparent support for a semi-autonomous third sector. If the latter, then Gains and Stoker's (2009) argument that the inclusion of new non-state networks challenges and complicates the roles played by state actors would also support the assertions made in this research regarding the EPPP implementation gap (defined by Lowndes *et al.* (1997:334) as the difference between *intent and action*) evident between policy and practice (see Section 5.4).

Stakeholder engagement is widely acknowledged as a way to overcome the implementation gap through what could be termed the empowerment paradigm of joint responsibility and ownership (Evans, 2004; Fairbrass, 2003; Jepson, 2005; Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Sampford, 2002). With the implementation gap described as a disjuncture between policy and practice, this research brought an empirical focus to analysis of this concept via actors stratified within the Policy Implementation Continuum, concluding that a bias remains towards state formulation and non-state delivery. This bias is, in part, responsible for poor uptake of EPPP at the local level due to disenfranchisement resulting from poor stakeholder engagement during the EPPP formulation process. Although it is asserted by some (Bulkeley, 2005; Liverman, 2004; O'Toole and Burdess, 2004; Thompson, 2005) that governance includes state actors playing non-exclusive roles and the greater inclusion of non-state actors, findings have suggested that the state has devolved responsibility for EPPP delivery whilst retaining control of formulation. This disjuncture presents further research opportunities (see 9.6, Research Theme 1), including an analysis of continued 'top-down' (state) control of the

'bottom-up' (non-state) approach to EPPP formulation and delivery, i.e. the recent reintroduction of state actors into the environmental governance approach of non-state partnership-working (see 9.4). This is compounded by this study's findings suggesting lack of representation, partnership exclusivity and increasing state inclusion in third sector partnerships, which raises further questions regarding exactly how 'local' is the local approach (see 9.6, Research Theme 3). However, Rhodes (1996) argued that governance entails the state allocating resources and exercising control and co-ordination, whilst Bulkeley (2005) asserted that state actors are not necessarily the only or most significant participants, and that rather than seeing government and governance as necessarily opposite, they are part of a continuum of governing by state and non-state actors. These arguments, therefore, support the assertions of this thesis that the state remains the controlling and dominant actor in environmental governance.

Empirical and theoretical findings suggest, therefore, that the state remains the dominant actor in governance networks. I have argued that environmental governance is in practice only an EPPP delivery vehicle that remains firmly embedded within a hierarchical state framework during the formulation process. I have also argued that the widely argued blurring of boundaries are in fact more a strengthening of state governing through its continuing control of the Policy Implementation Continuum through *governance based on hierarchies* (Paavola *et al.*, 2009). Herein lays a further research opportunity regarding this thickening of the state (see 9.6, Research Theme 2). Situated within this research would also be an analysis of the differing governance regimes within the environmental sector, including aims, objectives, outcomes and process evaluations. The reason for identifying differing regimes, Paavola *et al.* (2009) argued, is the difficulty in disentangling the influence of one process from many. The environmental sector, for example, offers different frameworks for analysis, including AES (see Section 4.3), EWGS (see Section 4.4) and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (see Sections 5.3.1 and 5.4.1). Analysis of these governance frameworks will show how actors at different levels of the Policy

Implementation Continuum interact with each other, including market-based approaches, state control, partnership-working and the representativeness of community-based initiatives.

9.4 The Partnership Approach

The Rio Earth Summit's 'local approach' now underpins many approaches to environmental issues, with Local Agenda 21 providing an early environmental governance framework to implement global aims through national, regional and local policies (Evans, 2004; Vogler; 2005, Raco *et al.*, 2006). This framework is, for the most part, based on the assumption that partnerships bring collaborative advantage (Darlow and Newby, 1997; Huxham, 1996) through self-governing networks aiming to influence policy and facilitate the delivery of EPPP (Edwards *et al.*, 2001; Goodwin, 1998; Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998, 2000). Whilst also part of the shift from government to governance (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998), partnerships also respond to the complex and multi-faceted nature of EPPP, the inter-connectedness of EPPP spanning local, regional and international levels, and 'widening the agenda from the environment to sustainability or sustainable development, with its economic, social, and political dimensions' (Fairbrass, 2003:14).

Unlike international regulations resulting from inter-governmentally negotiated agreements, these new partnerships rely on the voluntary commitments of non-state actors, working in collaboration with states, in order to accelerate the implementation of sustainable development goals. Due to these features, many scholars of international relations and of environmental studies have recognised partnerships (within and outside of the UN system) as new institutions in environmental governance (Mert, 2009). Consequently, it is argued by some that partnerships are seen to be an improved method of problem solving as they apply a multi-agency approach to multi-dimensional problems (Greer, 2001; Scott, 2004). It is further argued that partnership-working is becoming increasingly important at the local level, as cross-

sector partnerships including public, private and third sector actors work to improve EPPP delivery and to overcome the bureaucracy of traditional state models (Edwards *et al.*, 2001; Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004; Yarwood, 2002). The government includes partnership-working on five occasions in its 'Securing the future - delivering the UK's sustainable Development Strategy' (HM Government, 2005) and on four occasions in 'The Role of the VCS in Service Delivery' (HM Treasury, 2002) white paper. Partnership-working became integral to New Labour's Third Way politics, where it sought to overcome the inefficiency of bureaucracy and the inequity of market solutions (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004). However, Lowndes and Sullivan (2004:52) argued that New Labour's approach has added to the 'complexity of the institutional terrain with the introduction of new regional structures and the proliferation of micro-level agencies operating 'below' the local authority level'.

This thesis explored and analysed the partnership approach to environmental governance through the empirical lens of the Moor Trees Partnership Network. The researcher's embeddedness in the sector provided a rich mix of qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of state and non-state actors, with findings supporting Lowndes and Sullivan's assertions regarding institutional complexity, i.e. that the state is 'thickening', as opposed to 'hollowed out'. A key feature of partnerships is stakeholder collaboration through an interactive and discursive process. Further analysis, however, identified inaccuracies in the incorrect assumption by state actors that partnerships are automatically more inclusive than bureaucratic or market-based approaches, i.e. that the governance model often assumes stakeholder involvement due to its inclusion of non-state actors. A lack of representation within partnerships was explored in Section 6.2.2, where it was found that partnerships can be accused of *selective representation* by a central core of arguably national policy-aligned actors. As such, the environmental sector can be subject to contested legitimacy, resulting in reduced uptake at the grassroots level (see Section 8.5.6, where the OPAL project provides an example of how extensive community consultation can lead to a successful grassroots uptake).

It was concluded that as a key aspect of governance (Stoker, 1997), community involvement needs to be designed-in to local partnerships via the effective partnership-working model (see Figure 4.1), and not assumed-in. It was further concluded that community involvement should be seen as both an outcome and a component of partnership-working (see also Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004), supporting the case for an ongoing and evolving stakeholder engagement process throughout the partnership approach. Indeed, findings suggested that public participation and cross-sector involvement implies a heterarchy of like-minded actors involved in the formulation and delivery of EPPP.

Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) also argued that partnerships are traditionally nested in mutuality and trust, with other commentators arguing that they increase funding opportunities (Hodge, 2007; Martin, 1995; Pearce and Mawson, 2009; Thompson, 2005; Yarwood, 2002). Researcher findings from the MTPN, however, contested these assertions, presenting an argument that mutuality and trust can be lost through the necessity to compete for the new funds that partnerships make available. This was evident in a number of MTPN partnerships. Natural England's Access to Nature programme, in particular, provided an example of a new (state-managed) funding programme aimed at partnership-working, which created numerous trust issues amongst partnership actors regarding the allocation of awarded funds (see Section 7.2.3). This new competitive approach to funding, findings suggest, can be attributed to the unsustainable growth of the third sector⁹¹ resulting from New Labour's enthusiasm for contracting out public services and its Active Citizenship agenda. To compound this problem, the sector is also suffering from a resource deficit (see Section 5.3) due to a focus on project-based funding whilst not simultaneously providing for the core⁹² costs of the organisation. It was also found that, as a result of these funding constraints, the power attributed and / or assumed to members at each level varied in its form and effectiveness with

⁹¹ The Cabinet Office's Office of the Third Sector (2008) describes the third sector as including a variety of non-profit organisations, including; voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives, mutuals, societies, housing association, faith groups, and trusts. It estimated that there were 104,391 third sector organisations in 2008 with approximately 634,000 employees, a rise of 65% since 2000/01.

⁹² Core costs refer to the central office costs incurred in the running of projects.

an ensuing unequal power balance between 'technically equal' actors (Yarwood, 2002). These power structures became especially evident as it was found that actors came to partnerships with different resources, making it difficult, for example, for third sector actors to have their voices heard on funding requirements alongside better-resourced government and private sector actors (Balloch and Taylor, 2001). Experiences recorded from a number of MTPN third sector actors supported this argument, raising questions regarding the status and profile awarded by the state to non-state actors without whom governance networks would be deemed unrepresentative.

Partnership power constructs and a lack of real community representation became a recurring theme throughout the MTPN. These findings supported the arguments by some scholars that community involvement in partnerships can be tokenistic and designed to placate public scepticism regarding the democratic legitimacy of the programmes the partnerships had been formed to deliver (Arnstein, 1968; Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004; Savan *et al.*, 2004). A number of MTPN 'community involvement', 'stakeholder engagement' and 'public participation' initiatives were analysed, with broad agreement from actors involved that this capacity-building and creation of social capital was important in achieving sustainable development goals at the local level. However, many partnerships within the MTPN adopted a two-tiered approach to EPPP formulation and delivery. The first tier focused on formulation and consisted of state and an exclusive set of non-state actors. The second tier focused on delivery and included a wider set of grassroots actors often 'contracted-in' to bring legitimacy and provide the EPPP delivery mechanism. This thesis has conceptualised 'contracting-in' as situated alongside Stoker's (1998) 'contracting-out' of public services and Jessop's (1995) 'hollowing out' of the state. Supported by the analyses of Section 7.3 (managerial technologies) and Section 8.4 (state domination), it becomes clear that further empirical focus is needed to further the theoretical and conceptual understanding of partnerships (see 9.6, Research Theme 4), as my findings have contended with arguments by many scholars regarding their

collaborative advantage and policy-influencing roles (Darlow and Newby, 1997; Goodwin, 1998; Huxham, 1996; Healy, 1992; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998).

Although the partnership concept is not a new one, bridging the implementation gap still challenges both researchers and practitioners. Conceptualised by the 'Effective Partnership-working' model and placed in the environmental context, this thesis found the components of *responsibility* (Curry, 2001; Gibbs and Jonas, 2000; Jepson, 2005; Pearce and Mawson, 2003; Raco and Imrie, 2000), *legitimacy* (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Dryzek, 2001; Goodwin, 1998; Lowndes and Sullivan, 2004; Stoker, 2006; Wallington *et al.*, 2008) and *accountability* (Erkkila, 2007; Davidson and Lockwood, 2008; Goodin, 2003; Jepson, 2005; Jessop, 1997; Mackinnon, 2000; Paavola, 2007) to be addressed through existing academic literature as separate but not as combined concepts and with little empirical focus. This study sought to combine these components to form a partnership-working framework through the development of the effective partnership-working Model. It was concluded that, placed within the framework of environmental governance, the components ran not concurrently, but sequentially. Firstly, the responsibility for EPPPs needs to be devolved by the state, secondly they need to *acquire legitimacy*, and finally, the partnerships created to formulate and deliver the EPPP need to *provide accountability* (see Part IV of this thesis).

Despite state discourses of community responsibility and self-governing through partnership-working (Thompson, 2005), analysis of the responsibility component by this study highlighted the challenges faced by the state when seeking to put policy into practice. It showed that, whilst it is conceptually and strategically embraced by the state through working with levels 3 and 4 of the Policy Implementation Continuum, non-state actors from the MTPN were found to be increasingly hesitant in accepting EPPP responsibility due to the bureaucratic drag and audit culture of state intervention (see Section 7.3.2 regarding Managerial Technologies and Section 7.4 regarding hierarchical power structures). Wider literature frames these issues as

'governing from a distance' (Raco and Imrie, 2000) and 'governing through communities' (Murdoch, 1997). MTPN actors supported these assertions by suggesting that the government's grassroots approach is more rhetoric than reality. To support these assertions, many MTPN actors referred to the lack of funding made available by the state to the environmental sector, with some suggesting that the state is, in part, devolving responsibility to benefit itself from new funding streams made accessible through working in partnership with non-state actors (see Section 7.2.3, regarding Natural England's Access to Nature programme). This conclusion does, however, contend with wider scholarly opinion and government white papers which suggest that partnership-working increases funding opportunities (Hodge, 2007; Martin, 1995; Pearce and Mawson, 2009; Thompson, 2005; Yarwood, 2002). This presents further opportunities for further empirical analysis by academics and policy-makers alike.

This study placed acquiring legitimacy as the next step towards effective partnership-working. Dryzek (2001) argued that legitimacy requires reflective assent (that action(s) only become legitimate when the actor has the approval of society i.e. those affected by the action(s)), and Connelly *et al.* (2006) argued that partnership legitimacy is often asserted through direct access by previously marginalised stakeholders. These arguments were found conceptually to underpin environmental governance, with partnerships seeking to provide the delivery mechanism for stakeholder engagement (see also Wheeler, 1996 regarding partnership improving local democracy). Stoker (1993) and Hutchinson (1994) also recognised that stakeholder legitimation is required for local sustainability strategies (Dryzek 1997, Edwards *et al.*, 2000). However, this study concluded that the lack of democratic legitimacy of these unelected actors led to reduced stakeholder engagement in the case of the MTPN (Boonstra, 2006; Bulkeley, 2005; Dryzek, 2001; Mackinnon, 2000). It also found a lack of community involvement in EPPP formulation, with further questions raised about the democratic accountability of non-elected actors due to the absence of the legitimation mechanisms of

representative democracy (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Dryzek, 2001; Goodwin, 1998; Imrie and Raco, 1999; Jepson, 2005; Mackinnon, 2000 and 2002). In addressing these perceived failures of partnership-working, it was concluded that stakeholder engagement needs to be representative of the wider community, whilst at the same time including a holistic accountability structure (see Section 7.5). Indeed, the multi-actor, semi-autonomous networks of environmental governance provide significant accountability challenges, with this study having identified four accountability scenarios through both a review of existing literature and empirical findings from the MTPN:

1. Environmental partnerships can become less accountable to the state by creating self-regulating operational and governance frameworks and structures (Goodwin, 1998; Imrie and Raco, 1998, 1999; Jepson 2005; Jessop, 1998; Mackinnon, 2000, 2002; Stoker, 1998).
2. Perhaps conversely, MTPN membership and stakeholder-driven environmental actors have diluted their accountability to members and stakeholders due to the increased accountability to funders' (often state) aims and objectives (Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Eden *et al.*, 2006; Goodwin, 1998; Jepson, 2005). Take, for example, the Moor Trees OPEP initiative, which is largely accountable to state actors whilst remaining largely removed from traditional member and stakeholder groups, in part, due to the privacy and security requirements of the programme.
3. The contracting-out of public services lacks government monitoring and review methodologies, resulting in scape-goating, blame avoidance and difficulties for the citizen to attribute responsibility for programme quality, effectiveness and efficiency of delivery (Boonstra, 2006; Jepson, 2005; Raco *et al.*, 2006; Savan *et al.*, 2004; Stoker, 1996; Yarwood, 2002).
4. The implied shift from hierarchical to heterarchical networks has been stifled by state managerial technologies implemented via third sector funding programmes and

environmental legislation (Jepson, 2005; Logan and Wekerle, 2008; Lockie, 2009; Mackinnon, 2000; MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999; Yarwood, 2002).

This study concluded that whilst the state builds its environment governance approach through discourses of devolved responsibility, community involvement, partnership-working and a quasi-entrepreneurial third sector, in reality the state has created a framework where it retains control of both EPPP formulation and delivery, and community engagement rhetoric is far outpacing the reality of partnerships on the ground (Taylor, 2007). Although partnership-working is argued to be conceptually sound and a delivery model that is widely embraced by state and non-state actors, I have concluded that a more robust approach is needed for it to be effective. In support of this assertion, questions have been raised as to why partnerships are beset by the problems highlighted in this study. One argument is that EPPPs are deeply affected by European Union level policy-making and that British environmental governance is challenged by the state's need to preserve relations with the European Union from whom high levels of funding are provided and by whom much environmental policy is formulated (Fairbrass, 2003). Indeed, I found funding to be central to many arguments and also that the state continues to dominate EPPP formulation (whilst in practice seeking to devolve responsibility for delivery). Further, state / non-state tensions are evident regarding EPPP subsidiarity, with policy analysts needing to merge theoretical and conceptual understandings of the partnership approach to environmental governance with wider empirical findings of environmental partnership-working.

To conclude, there remains a knowledge gap surrounding the practicalities of partnership-working, about their successes, and about the obstacles to effective working (Edwards *et al.*, 2000). This study has sought to address this knowledge gap through its empirical focus on the MTPN. The resulting Policy Implementation Continuum and Effective Partnership-working model provide a useful conceptual and methodological framework for further research. This

study has been situated within the environmental sector, but many of the findings and assertions are applicable to other sectors, with deeper analysis of partnership resilience and the development of implementation frameworks presenting exciting new research opportunities.

9.5 Research Challenges, Positionality and Reflexivity

This study collected and analysed data from the MTPN to assess the partnership approach to environmental governance. As pointed out by de Vaus (1996), whilst research should be methodologically robust, practically efficient and ethically sound, the three can conflict and require careful balancing. From the outset, it became clear that I was seen by some MTPN actors as both a researcher and a practitioner due to my Directorship at Moor Trees. I concluded that it was, therefore, critical to identify myself to all respondents as a researcher-practitioner due to the nature of the research i.e. the assessment of inter- and intra-actor relationships, including fiscal as well as operational analysis, presented methodological and ethical challenges. This conclusion was reinforced by the feedback I received from the sampling carried out within the network regarding willingness to take part in the study - whilst all agreed, many requested anonymity. My explanation of my Great Western Research sponsorship (as discussed in 3.6.5) was also an unexpected requirement at this stage. This further enforced my need to account for my positionality within the network and increased my awareness of the need to remain objective, as well as reflecting on my own influence on both respondent and researcher bias. Although these issues clearly formed part of an ethical approach, I also concluded that the reliability of the (mainly qualitative) data would be affected if respondents felt compromised regarding publication of their identification. Indeed, a large amount of rich and occasionally exclusive data was collected regarding the workings of environmental partnerships, some of which would be regarded by many MTPN actors as contentious.

The ethical challenge of my combined researcher-practitioner status was addressed by rigorous attention to informed consent and voluntary contribution. I also concluded that the sensitivity of some of the data collected necessitated further attention to the potential impact of the research itself. Being a stakeholder-sponsored thesis, action research was a major theme in both the methodology and the subsequent potential impact of findings. It became clear from the start of the research process that I was more than a researcher embedding myself in the research topic - I was an established practitioner diversifying into a researcher role. Thus, I had a professional and ethical responsibility to professional and academic colleagues to respect confidentiality, research objectively and report with sensitivity. However, I also had a responsibility to my sponsors, with GWR seeking to benefit businesses in the south-west of the UK, and Moor Trees seeking to build academic and scientific credentials, and improve its reputation as an environmental actor through improved partnership-working. This meant that I had obligations to meet, including the reporting of occasionally privileged information. I approached this obligation by creating set of rules to ensure ethical soundness, including the constant review of data sources, including if and how findings could be published. Fortunately, assurances of anonymity were sufficient to enable my ultimate reporting of research findings, with further written consent also given by some actors to use some potentially contentious material. I was also fortunate (perhaps due to my researcher-practitioner status) that this study also benefited from high response rates to both the survey and interview requests, thus removing the need to compel individuals to participate, or to invade privacy through repetitive requests to participate (de Vaus, 1996).

I would suggest that, due to the ethnographic nature of this study, my embeddedness within the environmental sector, the resulting access to all four levels of the Policy Implementation Continuum, and my dual researcher and practitioner roles resulted in the collection of high quality data. I also gained access to individuals from the most senior to the most junior within the Continuum's organisations. This itself presented further challenges due to the sensitivity of

some data collected (mostly through the semi-structured interviews) from individuals commenting on their own organisation's approach to partnership-working, in particular, financial issues. I concluded that the availability of this data was partly through the position of trust that I held as a known practitioner, something that may not have been available had I only been known as a 'researcher'. Thus, I gained an insider's account of the MTPN whilst analysing through the eyes of an outsider. Indeed, some of the conclusions drawn from this study have challenged my own preconceived ideas and opinions about partnership-working. As such, I feel confident that I have remained as objective as possible and constantly allowed for my position as researcher-practitioner, including the retention of trust placed in me by the many MTPN actors with whom I have worked in carrying out this study.

9.6 Directions for Future research

Findings suggest that the state is increasingly acknowledging the limits of its influence and resources, and attempting to harness the powers of the third and private sector for the delivery of its EPPP. Evidence of entrepreneurialism, the commodification of nature and full cost recovery initiatives also suggests that non-state actors are beginning to work independently from the state to deliver state-formulated EPPP. Research is required to explore if these findings highlight contrasting approaches i.e. whether the state trying to engage, whilst non-state actors are seeking to retain independence and autonomy, or if non-state actors are indeed seeking to work more closely with the state to increase their influence on policy-making and to benefit from potential funding streams. I suggest therefore, that whilst governance is relatively easy to theorise and conceptualise, there is a limited understanding of; (i) the contemporary environmental context and the suggestion that the state is increasingly reliant on non-state actors for EPPP delivery; (ii) the commodification of natural resources and the assignment of property rights (especially in the climate change context) and (iii) the

practicalities and operational frameworks of these new approaches. As such, I suggest the following future research themes:

1. *The Governance Disjuncture: an analysis of the state devolution of responsibility and the empowerment of non-state actors.* I suggest that discourses regarding the state devolving responsibility and empowering communities need to be explored in greater detail. In particular, by asking if the implementation gap between state governance policy and practice is intentional (by the state) so as to retain control of EPPP.
2. *The Thickening of the State.* I argue that instead of the state being 'hollowed out', it is, instead, actively 'thickening' its boundaries via an increasing involvement in multi-actor, cross sector partnership-working via managerial technologies.
3. *How local is the local? Examining partnership representativeness and exclusivity.* Findings have suggested that partnerships can be selective in their representativeness, thus leading to the continued marginalisation of the community actors with whom the state wishes to engage to through environmental governance.
4. *An empirical focus to further the theoretical and conceptual understanding of partnerships, focusing on the realities of collaborative advantage and their potential for policy influence.*

Appendix A: The Third Sector

This sector consists of organisations sharing the common characteristics of being non-governmental 'not-for-profits' organisations which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives.

The Cabinet Office (2007) describes the Third Sector as encompassing voluntary & community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and Mutuals both large and small (see Figure 3.3.1, level 3). In recognition of the growing role of this sector and the opportunities presented for the bottom-up implementation of PPP, The Office of the Third Sector (OTS) was created in May 2006 when the Home Office's Active Communities Directorate and the DTI's Social Enterprise Unit amalgamated. The decision to place the OTS at the *centre of government* in the Cabinet Office was taken in recognition of the increasingly important role the third sector plays in both society and the economy (Cabinet Office, 2007).

The following information was sourced from the Cabinet Office (2007).

Background

The Office of the Third Sector was created in May 2006 when the Active Communities Directorate in the Home Office, and the Social Enterprise Unit, in the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), amalgamated. The decision to place the OTS at the centre of government in the Cabinet Office was taken in recognition of the increasingly important role the third sector plays in both society and the economy.

What is the third sector?

The third sector is a diverse, active and passionate sector. Organisations in the sector share the common characteristics of being non-governmental organisations which are value-driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It encompasses voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and Mutuals both large and small.

Our vision

A thriving third sector, enabling people to change society.

Our aims

Our overarching aim is to develop an environment which enables the third sector to thrive, growing in its contribution to Britain's society, economy and environment.

Our thematic aims are to work in partnership with the sector to:

- Enable campaigning and empowerment, particularly for those at risk of social exclusion.

- Strengthen communities, drawing together people from different sections of society.
- Transform public services, through delivery, design, innovation and campaigning.
- Enable social enterprise growth and development, combining business and social goals.

Our role

We deliver on our aims by:

- Driving action to improve government and third sector partnership working and ensuring better terms of engagement, such as promoting the Compact.
- Funding programmes to support the sector's development, such as Capacitybuilders and Futurebuilders.
- Leading on the evidence base and analysis of the sector to better inform work of the government and third sector, such as the State of the Sector Panel and bespoke social enterprise research think pieces.
- Ensuring a good regulatory environment for the sector, such as the implementation of the Charities Act 2006.

Appendix B: Survey Introduction Page

My name is Clive Bastin. I am a PhD student at the University of Plymouth. I am studying environmental partnerships and am funded by Great Western Research (www.greatwesternresearch.ac.uk).

My main aim is to consider how partnerships play an increasing role in the environmental sector. My research looks at how these partnerships are used to deliver EPPP, and some of the issues involved.

Thank you for sparing time to take part in this survey. This should take no more than 30 minutes and no individual respondent or organisation will be identified in the published material.

Please complete this questionnaire based on your organisation's experience of partnership working.

Appendix C: Online survey Email Invitation

Dear *(inserted recipient name)*,

As you may be aware, I am doing a PhD in Environmental Partnerships.

One of my data collection methods is an online survey and I would be really grateful if you could spare me some of your time to complete it, it should take you no more than 20 minutes.

If you are happy to help, please visit my website by clicking [here](#) and then follow the instructions.

Kind regards,

Clive Bastin

M: 07974 070384

PhD Candidate – University of Plymouth, and
Director of Moor Trees

Appendix D: Interview Times (Minutes)

Interviewee	Sector	Time	Exec. Summary	Anonymity
1	Government	58	N	Y
2	Government	60	Y	Y
3	Government	75	Y	Y
4	Government	82	Y	Y
5	QUANGO	60	N	Y
6	QUANGO	76	Y	N
7	QUANGO	74	Y	Y
8	QUANGO	78	N	Y
9	QUANGO	80	N	Y
10	QUANGO	66	Y	N
11	Third	66	N	Y
12	Third	64	Y	N
13	Third	76	N	Y
14	Third	68	Y	Y
15	Third	74	N	Y
16	Private	63	N	N
17	Private	77	Y	Y
18	Private	76	Y	Y
19	Private	82	Y	Y
20	Private	85	Y	Y
	Totals: Government: 4 QUANGO: 6 Third: 5 Private: 5	Avge. 72	12 requested	16 requested

Appendix E: Online Survey Questions

Web Survey

My name is Clive Bastin. I am a PhD student at the University of Plymouth. I am studying environmental partnerships and am funded by Great Western Research

My main aim is to consider how partnerships play an increasing role in the environmental sector. My research looks at how these partnerships are used to deliver environmental plans, policies and programmes, and some of the issues involved.

Thank you for sparing time to take part in this survey. This should take no more than 20 minutes and your contribution will be anonymous (no individual respondent or organisation will be identified in the published material).

Please complete this questionnaire based on your organisation's experience of partnership working.

Please feel free to leave any questions blank that you do not wish to answer.

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

Please note that this information is for administration purposes only, all reports and results will be anonymous

Your name

Your organisation

Your email

Are you familiar with issues concerning the partnership work of your organisation?

Yes

No

Please select your organisation type:

Public Sector

Government-funded Programme

Voluntary / Community Sector

Private Sector

Other (please specify)

Where is your organisation:

Local area only

Regional (South West of England)

National

International

Organisation size (staff number)

0 - 249

249 +

Not sure

Please highlight your organisation's main area of partnership work:

- Carbon
- Conservation / Biodiversity
- Energy
- Waste
- Other (please specify)

PARTNERSHIPS

Please consider your organisation's experience of environmental partnership and tick one box for each of the following statements:

Potential Benefits of Partnerships

Partnerships have become an important tool for the delivery of environmental programmes

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Partnership bring together public, private & community sector groups, which would otherwise not usually work together

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

They increase the financial resources available to individual partners

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

They increase the availability of local knowledge, where national or regional partners work closely with more local partners

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

They benefit from diversified and enhanced skill sets

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

They increase the influence of your organisation

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

They provide new market opportunities for your organisation

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

They benefit from diversified and enhanced skill sets

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Please add any comments you would like to make regarding the benefits of partnerships from your organisation's viewpoint

Potential Drawbacks of Partnerships

Complex budgetary arrangements e.g. allocating and accounting for individual partner budgets

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Weak internal communications e.g. partners can become out of touch with each other's activities

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

The brand identity of a partnerships is not always representative of all the partners

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

They can be dominated by one or a few organisations

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Please add any comments you would like to make regarding the drawbacks of partnerships from your organisation's viewpoint

RESPONSIBILITY

This section considers if and how the responsibility for the delivery of specific environmental objectives (e.g. reduced waste to landfill, delivery of Biodiversity Action Plans, energy efficiency) are being shifted downward from Government to community level. Please answer the following based on your organisation's experience:

Partnerships are increasingly responsible for the delivery of our own objectives

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Partnerships are increasingly responsible for the delivery of Government environmental objectives

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

The shift of responsibility from the government to community level is important to meet environmental objectives

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

The Government allocates sufficient funding to enable this devolved approach

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Partnerships apportion this responsibility equally between the different partners

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Do you have any thoughts on the benefits and drawbacks regarding the Government's shifting of their responsibility for the delivery of environmental objectives to partnerships?

LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy in this context means that decisions made (and actions taken) by environmental partnership (EP) are considered to represent aspirations and needs of the wider community, This means that the partners have consulted widely or include sufficient stakeholder numbers and diversity.

EP tend to self-select their members

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

EP tend to self-select their members

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

EP usually include Public Sector partners

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

EP should include local community partners

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

All partners receive a fair opportunity to contribute to decision-making

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

EP are open and transparent in their activities

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Please add any comments you would like to make regarding the legitimacy of environmental partnerships

ACCOUNTABILITY

This includes both financial and operational processes i.e. accountability for meeting agreed aims and objectives.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The partnerships our organisation has been involved in are usually supported by Government grants

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Partnership-working in our organisation usually includes a clear monitoring and review process

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Our partnership work is transparent in the management and reporting of finances

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Many partners in our partnerships are financially self-governing

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Many partners in our partnerships are unaccountable regarding grant funding expenditure (except to donor(s))

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

In our partnership arrangements, grant funding monitoring and review is not clearly followed-up by donor(s)

Strongly Agree
Agree
No Opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

The partnerships our organisation has been involved in are usually supported by Government grants

Strongly Agree
Agree
No opinion
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Our partnerships provide a clear structure detailing who is accountable for the delivery of a project's aims & objectives

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

In our organisation, monitoring & review is an important process to assess partnership success

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

In our experience, performance metrics imposed on Government-funded partnerships reduce programme efficiency with regard to delivery of the programme to agreed timescales

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

In our experience, performance metrics imposed on Government-funded partnerships reduce programme efficiency with regard to efficient use of awarded fund

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Please add any comments you would like to make regarding the accountability of environmental partnerships

VOLUNTARY CARBON OFFSET ('VCO')

The VCO market has been selected as the case study for this research. This is due to the new environmental partnerships that are being formed between VCO programme providers ('PP') and organisations seeking to offset their carbon emissions ('offsetters').

Is your organisation directly involved in VCO?

- Yes
- No (please still complete this section)

Please indicate your thoughts on the following statements:

The relationship between offsetters and PP is a form of environmental partnership

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

VCO demonstrates how the corporate and environmental sectors can work in partnership

Strongly Agree

Agree

No opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

The VCO market demonstrates how environmental objectives can be met by non-state partners

Strongly Agree

Agree

No opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Programme providers and offsetters should be both transparent and accountable regarding their carbon (emissions) calculation methodology

Strongly Agree

Agree

No opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Programme providers and offsetters should both be transparent and accountable regarding their carbon offset methodology

Strongly Agree

Agree

No opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Are there any further comments you would like to add regarding the benefits and drawbacks of the VCO market and partnership?

Defra is planning the launch of a VCO industry kite mark to improve standards and credibility of VCOs. It will be non-obligatory, but all programme providers will be encouraged to join. The following statements are drawn from stakeholder meetings held by Defra.

The kite mark will improve the public credibility of VCOs due to the operating standards set by Defra

Strongly Agree

Agree

No opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

The kite mark should require financial transparency of its members, whereby project income and expenditure is made publicly available

Strongly Agree

Agree

No opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

The kite mark should require operational transparency of its members, whereby their methodologies and delivery frameworks are made publicly available

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The kite mark should require scientific transparency of its members, whereby rationales and appropriate literature are made publicly available

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The kite mark should stipulate independent verification of member programmes, thus improving market credibility

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The existing lack of regulation makes VCO less credible and therefore reduces the amount of people and businesses offsetting their carbon

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Are there any further comments you would like to add regarding the proposed VCO kite mark?

CONCLUSION

As part of the ongoing development of this research project I would appreciate your feedback on the following aspects of this survey:

Questionnaire length

- Too long
- Right length
- Too short

Questionnaire structure

- Too complex
- No opinion
- Easy to follow

The flow of the questions

- Not easy to follow
- No opinion
- Easy to follow

Language complexity

Too complex

Neutral

Easy to understand

I will also be conducting a number of semi-structured interviews. Please click below if you would rather not participate

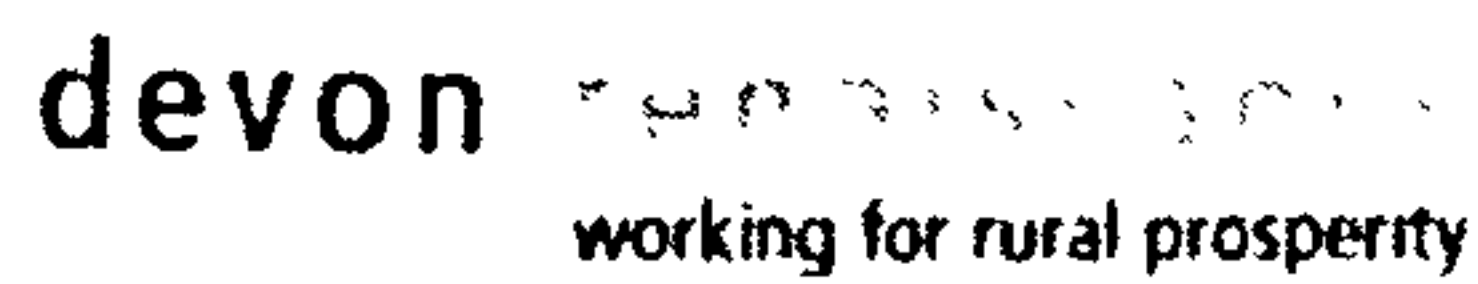
No thanks

Please click here if you would like an executive summary of my research when complete

Yes please

Powered by SurveySolutions: Conduct your own [employee satisfaction survey](#)

Appendix F: Community Boost Fund Guidelines



Devon Renaissance – Community Boost Fund

Guidance for Applicants

Please read this guidance carefully before completing the application form. If you need further advice on anything in this guidance, please contact the CBF

Project Team on 01837 658643.

What is the Community Boost Fund?

The Community Boost Fund (CBF) is a small scale capital funding scheme aimed at creating and supporting sustainable communities across rural Devon. The scheme has been designed to support the delivery of services to communities, with preference being given to projects in hard to reach areas that are currently lacking in service provision. By investing in projects to improve community facilities, the CBF aims to enable groups to work towards increasing their social and / or economic and / or environmental sustainability. Funding is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and funds are limited.

What are the basic project criteria?

Location

Projects must be of benefit to rural communities (defined as settlements of fewer than 10,000 people), and must be based and delivering within East, Mid and North Devon, the South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge and West Devon.

Applicant

Applications can be submitted from new or existing 'not for profit' organisations with a constitution, such as community / voluntary sector groups, charities, social enterprises and 'not for profit' businesses. Applications are also welcomed from Local Authorities, town / parish councils and individuals who are acting on behalf of a wider partnership or network. Religious organisations are eligible to apply to the CBF, but projects must be secular in their nature.

Amount of Funding

Minimum CBF Grant: £5,000

Maximum CBF Grant: £15,000

Contribution: The CBF can contribute a maximum of 50% of the total project costs. Applicants need to source the remaining match funding.

Types of Match Funding: An upper limit of 10% of the total project costs can be covered by 'in kind' costs and donations, such as volunteer hours or donations of goods or services, costed at market value. The rest must be made up of cash contribution(s).

Restrictions: Organisations are restricted to a maximum of 2 separate applications to the CBF, in order to ensure a fair distribution of the funding.

Timescales

All projects must be complete, with all expenditure finished and claimed back from CBF, by 31 March 2008.

What kinds of projects are eligible?

The CBF supports capital projects that are designed to solve an identified problem that people living in rural areas are experiencing in accessing services. The services to be delivered must be determined by local need, not just what a community wants, and should fit with existing local plans and strategies. The more additional Tier 1 services a project can deliver, the higher priority it will be given, balanced with an appropriate delivery of additional Tier 2 services (see below). Projects that provide innovative solutions to problems facing rural communities are encouraged.

Identified Problems

Projects will need to demonstrate that the whole community has been represented in establishing the need for the proposal and that a range of groups have had the opportunity to have their needs met by the project. This is to ensure that the available funding has the maximum impact possible, by not investing in the piecemeal provision of services. Every project needs to demonstrate that their project will enable more Tier 1 (essential) services to be delivered than are currently available, or planned in the near future, in the location or its immediately surrounding area.

Sustainability

Applicants need to demonstrate that their project is sustainable in the long term, and are encouraged to seek help and advice on becoming more sustainable from such organisations as the Community Council of Devon, Co-Active. Projects that are unable to generate some income to work towards increasing their sustainability will not be eligible for funding.

Types of Delivery

1. The improvement of, or new build of, a facility in a fixed location.

Typically, this would be through new multi-use community facilities or upgrades to such facilities to enable a range of services to be delivered more effectively or broaden the range of services available or increase their usage. Multi-use community facilities are defined for this purpose as facilities that provide for the needs of a range of sectors in the community. In order to be eligible, a fixed location facility must deliver more than one Tier 1 (Essential) service (see below).

2. The development of a mobile/outreach service delivery facility.

The sorts of facilities that would be covered include remote service / advice delivery points, such as kiosks / outreach surgeries or mobile services. The projects costs might be the purchase of capital equipment and materials to deliver the project. In order to be eligible, a mobile / outreach facility must deliver at least one Tier 1 (Essential) service (see below).

Types of Services

Tier	Notes	Examples
<i>Tier 1 (Essential) Services</i>	These are services that are essential to making a community more sustainable, and are the priority services within the CBF, including:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social care • Health • Education • 'Not for profit' retail • Finance • Transport • Democracy • Legal advice • Community safety • Employment
<i>Tier 2 (Leisure and Recreational) Services</i>	These are non-essential services that contribute to the sustainability of the project and to the blend of services delivered within a community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure • Entertainment • Recreational

What cannot be funded?

The following list gives a guide to specific issues that would automatically make a project ineligible. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

- Single-use facilities (defined for this purpose as those offering only one service / those used exclusively by one group of beneficiaries).
- Projects with a predominantly amenity value, as the CBF is designed to support the delivery of services.
- Ongoing costs, such as overheads for utilities / staff.
- Statutory services that should be provided by Government / Local Authorities.

- Projects that have already started.
- Costs relating to preparatory work that has been paid for prior to the approval of a grant from the CBF, such as planning permissions / consents / licences.
- Projects of a political / exclusively religious nature.
- Projects that seek to improve, or increase the value of, the applicant's own property.
- Projects that only seek to deliver Tier 2 services and do not incorporate any Tier 1 services.

How are applications assessed?

The CBF application process reflects the scale of the scheme and has been designed to be as straight forward as possible. The need for applications to be turned around quickly has been reflected in the scheme's assessment process. The CBF application / assessment process is as follows:

- Contact the CBF Project Team on 01837 658643 or cbf@ruraldevon.org to discuss your project proposal. If appropriate, a CBF application form will be forwarded to you. If your project is ineligible we will always try to direct you to a funding scheme that meets your requirements.
- Complete the application form (help and advice is available from the CBF Project Team) and submit it to Devon Renaissance.
- Completed application forms are checked initially by the CBF Project Team, who will contact you should any clarification or further information be required.
- Completed application forms are then appraised by members of the CBF Project Steering Group, which comprises representatives from the voluntary, community and Local Authority sectors who are all experienced in community development. Each project is appraised against a set range of criteria, including need, benefits, value for money and deliverability (project timetable and management).
- The CBF Project Steering Group then meet to make decisions on the appraised applications. The decision types are
 - Approve for funding
 - Reject as inappropriate for this funding stream, or as insufficiently high priority to receive funding.
 - Defer for further information to be submitted, or to develop the project further.
- The CBF Project Team will inform you of the decision of the CBF Project Steering Group. Successful applicants will be sent a grant agreement detailing the terms and conditions of their award and the procedures for claiming the grant and reporting on the progress of the project. The CBF Project Team will maintain contact with you for the duration of the delivery of your project. Please note that successful applicants may be required to participate in publicity to promote the CBF.

Application Deadlines and Timescales

Application Deadline	Steering Group Meeting
Tue 13 March 2007	Tue 27 March 2007
Tue 24 April 2007	Tue 8 May 2007
Tue 5 June 2007	Tue 19 June 2007
Tue 17 July 2007	Tue 31 July 2007
Tue 28 August 2007	Tue 11 September 2007
Tue 9 October 2007	Tue 23 October 2007
Tue 22 November 2007	Tue 6 December 2007

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. Grants are allocated at the discretion of the CBF Project Steering Group. The CBF Project Team cannot guarantee the success of any project.
2. Grants cannot be paid retrospectively, so do not start your project or commit expenditure on it before the date of your grant agreement.

How to complete the CBF Application Form

Please contact the CBF Project Team on 01837 658643 for assistance with completing the CBF application form.

The form has been split into two parts; Part 1 is a Word document and Part 2 is an Excel spreadsheet. Please complete both parts of the form electronically if possible as this will make it easier for you to amend and resubmit the application if required.

Application Form – Part 1

The form has been designed to guide you through the questions. Please ensure that you do not exceed the word limits on questions where specified.

Special Note on Question 21 – Project Outcomes

Outcomes are the changes and effects that happen as a result of your project. Identifying the outcomes should lead directly from the identified problem you are addressing in question 11.

You are particularly encouraged to consider the effects your project will have on the local economy, as a strong local economy will, in turn, provide support to the community.

In addition, any appropriate community and environmental outcomes should be listed, and may include:

- **Community outcomes**
 - Greater interest / participation / representation in community activities
 - Increased involvement in the democratic process / community decision making
 - Increased volunteering / mentoring
 - Improved understanding between different sections of the community / improved relations between them
 - Improved access to information
- **Environmental outcomes**
 - Protection of landscape / visual amenity
 - Improvement / protection of historic environment
 - Improvement / protection of local biodiversity
 - Improvements in efficient use of resources
 - Reduction in use of cars / promotion of sustainable transport
 - Opportunities for the use of renewable energy
 - Use of local labour / materials
 - Increased environmental awareness of the community / visitors / businesses

Tracking outcomes

In order to assess the success of the project, you will need to measure whether or not it has achieved the outcomes you have listed. To do this, you should consider the following guidance:

Decide what information you need to collect

You will need to set some indicators to specify when an outcome has been achieved. For example, if one of your outcomes is to provide a health awareness campaign you could measure the number of sessions / attendances.

Decide how to collect the information

At a later stage of your project you may wish to gather information on how effective your campaign has been to members of the community. An information gathering exercise could be based around a questionnaire, a consultation, observations or interviews. There are several ways to collect information. You will need to decide which is the most suitable for your project and agree it through your project application.

Decide when to collect the information

The intervals that you use to collect the information will depend on the type of information you wish to collect. If you want to measure how many sessions of health advice there have been or how many people attended, it is just a matter of recording that information as and when the events take place. If you wish to gather information on the effectiveness of the

campaign overall you may wish to gather those opinions in one concentrated effort towards the end of the project.

Application Form – Part 2

Grants of between £5,000 and £15,000 are available up to a maximum of 50% of your total project costs. Up to 10% of your total project costs can be 'in kind' e.g. volunteer hours (please contact the CBF Project Team for agreed rates) or donations of goods or services costed at market value. VAT that your project is unable to reclaim may be included in your costs. Please complete your "Project Name" and summarise your anticipated project costs against the given capital headings. You only need to select the headings relevant to your project. Do not insert your own headings. If any of the figures in the "Total Costs by Category" column exceed £1,000 you will receive an electronic prompt asking you to list the category heading and provide a breakdown of all individual costs of over £1,000. Please add extra lines to the table if required.

Quotes – Please ensure that you obtain and submit copies of a minimum of 3 written quotes, based on a clear written specification of requirement, for your project costs.

Please identify all sources and amounts of funding for your project, including the contribution you are requesting from the CBF. Please provide the name of the funder, indicate whether the funding is confirmed or pending, give the date the funding was secured or is expected and show the amount. Remember that any 'in kind' costs must be balanced by 'in kind' contributions listed under capital funding.

Your total capital project funding must equal your total capital project costs. If there is a mismatch between these figures you will receive an electronic prompt asking you to check and amend the figures accordingly.

How to submit your completed CBF Application Form

Please email both completed parts of the form to cbf@ruraldevon.org and send the following information:

- a signed hard copy of page 5 (Part 1);
- a copy of your organisation's constitution;
- copies of relevant consent documents;
- copies of quotes;
- copies of match funding confirmation.

to:

The Community Boost Fund Project Team
Devon Renaissance
7C Cranmere Road
Exeter Road Industrial Estate
Okehampton
Devon EX20 1UE

Appendix G: Moor Trees Funders

All data collected from publicly available records, including Annual Report published on Moor Trees website.

State Funders

- Awards for All (Part of the Big Lottery Fund)
- Access to Nature
- Big Lottery Fund (via OPAL)
- Breathing Places (BBC initiative managed by the Big Lottery Fund)
- Community Boost Fund (managed by Devon Renaissance, an SWRDA programme)
- Dartmoor Sustainable Development Fund
- Southwest Foundation (from the European Social Fund)
- Teignbridge Leader Plus (from the European Union)
- Tamar Valley Sustainable Development Fund

Non-State Funders

- Bromley Trust
- Charles Hayward Foundation
- Dulverton Trust
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Elmgrant Trust
- JP Getty Charitable Trust
- Lankelly Chase Foundation
- Restore
- Steel Charitable Trust
- V
- Will Charitable Trust
- Woodland Trust

Appendix H: Moor Trees Community Volunteer Groups

BBC	Autumnwatch, Breathing Places, Radio Devon, Springwatch
BiTC	Community volunteering from Businesses
BTCV	National volunteering practical conservation charity
Private Sector (CSR partnerships)	Awards for All, Child Support Agency, Devon County Council, EDF Energy, MITIE, Natural England, Toshiba
Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS)	Exeter, Okehampton, Plymouth, South Hams, Tavistock, Teignbridge
Dartmoor National Park	Education groups
Devon Mammal Group	Special interest conservation/community science group
Devon Youth Service	Young offenders and excluded groups
Devonport Regeneration Company	
Disability groups	Colebrook Housing Association
Groundwork	National Volunteer and training body
HMP Dartmoor	Offenders
Local Colleges:	Duchy, Kitto Community, PCFE, PCAD, Tamarside
Local Schools:	Barley Lane, Exeter Cathedral, Ratcliffe, South Brent Primary, St George's Primary, St Peter's Primary, Widecombe Primary
Millennium Volunteers	Young people's volunteering project
Mothers and Toddlers	Devonport support group
Plymouth Tree Partnership	City Council partnership to promote value of city trees
Refugee & Asylum Seekers	Support group
Tavistock Taskforce	Excluded young people
Tree Wardens	Community groups (South Hams and Plymouth)
Universities	Exeter, Leeds, Plymouth

Appendix I: OPAL Beneficiary Tracking Spreadsheet

Breakdown	Outcome	Total	Active Beneficiaries	Passive Beneficiaries	Total Beneficiaries
Field days	1				
site visits					
other activities					
Opal web registrations	1				
National Opal web registrations	1				
National survey packs distributed	2				
Teaching materials	2				
downloaded from the web					
publications					
TV					
Opal young environmentalists scientists registrations	3				
Voluntary sector membership (number of organisations)	3				
National survey data entries	4				
Community events	4				
Organisations working with Opal	5				
<i>pls add name of organisation</i>					
Env. information sources provided on Opal website	5				

Source: Moor Trees

Appendix J: OPAL Funding Bid References to State PPP

1. Outdoors For All

An Action Plan by DEFRA resulting from the Rural White Paper 2000 *Our Countryside: the future* to increase the number of people from under-represented groups who access the natural environment (Natural England, 2008c).

2. Opportunity for All 2009 Strategy Document

A report by the Department of Work & Pensions setting out the government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion (Department of Work and Pensions, 2009).

3. Regional Sustainable Development Framework

Commissioned by the Government Office for the South West (Oursouthwest.com, 2001).

4. Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The IMD is produced by the government Department of Communities & Local Government. It combines indicators, chosen to cover economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England (Communities & Local Government, 2009).

5. Regional Spatial Strategy

A strategy by the South West Council which aims to locate development in places where jobs and homes can be more in balance (South West Council, 2006).

6. Dartmoor National Park LBAP

Each Local Biodiversity Action Plan works on the basis of partnership to identify local priorities and to determine the contribution they can make to the delivery of the national Species and Habitat Action Plan targets (United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan, 2007).

7. Plymouth City Local Development Framework (Core Strategy)

The set of documents produced by Plymouth City Council which guides planning and development in the City of Plymouth until 2021 & beyond.

8. Plymouth City Council Green Space Strategy (2008-2023)

The strategy to protect and improve Plymouth's green spaces, providing the vision and objectives for planning and management.

9. South West Strategic Infrastructure Partnership

A document produced by the South West Forum promoting third sector involvement in local service delivery.

Source: OPAL Funding Bid

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