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Savanta:

Bank of England Banknote Imagery

Findings Report

October 2025

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Bank of England

Make Better Decisions

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Background, Objectives, and Methodology

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Background to the research

The Bank of England (“the Bank”) is responsible for issuing banknotes and wants to ensure the public can continue to use cash with confidence in the future. The Bank is planning to design a new series of banknotes which incorporates the latest anti-counterfeiting technology and accessibility features.

Bank of England notes have showcased notable historical figures since 1970. Yet there are many ways to represent the UK on banknotes. In July 2025, the Bank conducted a public consultation into theme preferences to understand if the public would like the Bank to continue to feature historical figures, or if there are other themes they would prefer to see represented.

The purpose of this research is to further explore two of the alternative theme options – ‘Nature’ and ‘Architecture & Landmarks’ – comparing these against the current theme to better understand the public’s appetite for change.



Research objectives

The Bank has established clear criteria for theme selection. The chosen theme must:

- Symbolise the UK
- Resonate with the public
- Not be divisive
- Support banknote authentication
- Endure in time



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

01

Understand public sentiment toward two of the themes on the shortlist (Nature and Architecture & Landmarks), and how these two themes compare with sentiment towards historical figures, including: resonance, potential to be divisive, perceived strengths and weaknesses, specific sub-theme and image association, and national/regional response.

02

Explore whether there are ways to celebrate diversity within Nature and Architecture & Landmarks.

03

Understand if the public is open to a combination of Nature and Architecture & Landmarks being featured, and how this would impact their ease of use and accessibility.

04

Understand the public's appetite to change other aspects of the design, e.g., the notes'

Research methodology

Savanta used qualitative research as the primary investigative method, allowing exploration of the emotional responses, cultural associations, and underlying motivations that drive public opinion about national symbols.

The group dynamic allowed participants to build on each other's ideas, revealing how different demographic groups interpret themes – and perceptions of divisiveness – differently.

Design of the Discussion Guide was an iterative process between the Savanta and Bank of England teams.

The Discussion Guide included a deliberative element, in which moderators encouraged participants to reflect on examples of foreign banknotes.



QUALITATIVE FOCUS GROUPS

14 focus groups

- Conducted between 28 August and 18 September 2025.
- 90 minutes to allow deep exploration without participant fatigue.
- 9 x Online, 5 x In-person – the online-first approach created more inclusive participation opportunities.
- Between 7-10 participants in each group.

Please see the Appendix for a full breakdown of focus group composition.

Executive Summary

01

Participants prioritised the functionality and clarity of banknotes over imagery

Participants across all groups viewed banknotes primarily as a practical tool, with recognisability and clarity deemed more important than imagery.

Participants were clear that the aesthetic should not come at the expense of higher-priority design considerations.

02

This does not mean participants were ambivalent about imagery selection

Even participants who initially prioritised other design elements developed clear preferences for imagery as discussions progressed, indicating imagery matters more than people initially realise.

03

There was a clear desire to move away from Historical Figures

Most participants struggled to spontaneously identify current banknote imagery, reflecting its place in the hierarchy of priorities.

Once prompted, participants showed very limited loyalty to the Historical Figures theme. This imagery is seen as contentious and not representative of the UK's cultural and natural diversity.

04

A preference for Nature as the primary theme for new series

Nature is seen as a neutral and uncontroversial theme that reflects the diversity of UK and will endure over time.

That is not to say, however, that Architecture & Landmarks was unpopular. Most participants liked it as a theme, especially for its recognisability, but acknowledged potential for division that Nature avoids.

05

Participants were open to a combination of themes, if executed well

Most participants who expressed a view were positive combining Nature with Architecture & Landmarks.

Participants advised that any combinations should be intentional and coherent, rather than random juxtapositions, as this creates a stronger emotional connection and makes the imagery more memorable.

Design Prioritisation

Participants prioritised functionality over imagery, but that is not to say they were ambivalent about theme selection.

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8

Participants prioritised the *functionality and clarity* of banknotes over imagery

Participants across all groups viewed banknotes as a practical tool, with imagery a tertiary consideration, behind:

- Recognisability
- Security

Participants were clear that the aesthetic should not come at the expense of higher-priority design considerations.

The implication for the Bank is that it should not compromise recognisability, colour differentiation, or size distinctions in pursuit of imagery aesthetics. These are non-negotiable design elements.

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OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

01

Clear **recognisability** was the main priority, with participants emphasising the importance of retaining clear colour differentiation, denomination prominence, and distinct sizes.

This extended to specific suggestions to make banknote use more accessible.



The most significant part for me is the colour of the note. So you've got your purple twenties, your orange tens, fives, and then you've got your fifties. – Focus Group 9 | Leeds

I would include both braille on the banknote and deckle edging, to make it very easy for somebody with limited sight or limited cognisance, so each banknote has a different top edge.

– Focus Group 6 | Southern England

02

Participants also recognised the importance of **anti-counterfeiting technology** (albeit, without knowledge of specific security features).

Some framed theme suggestions in the context of how difficult a certain image or theme would be to forge, especially when discussing intricate design.



I think [imagery] is more important to its use. They make very fine lines so they're very hard to forge, etc. Yeah, it's more useful to the banknote than it is to me. I don't need to know what it's on it. – Focus Group 2 | Edinburgh

I guess to some extent you need a bit of complication because that stops forgery, doesn't it? [...] you've got your holograms and your silver strip and everything, but that must have to come into it at some point as well. – Focus Group 11 | Manchester

03

Most participants **framed banknote imagery in relation to these higher-priority design elements**.

Imagery is decorative but not essential to the experience of receiving or spending a banknote.



When it comes down to it, banknotes are functional. They're not a piece of art, you know, they're a means to an end. – Focus Group 9 | Leeds

To me, as long as they work, as long as I can spend them... It's nice to have a quick look at them. But it's not particularly relevant to me. – Focus Group 8 | Northern Ireland

Prioritisation of other design elements *does not mean participants were ambivalent* about imagery selection

Participants almost unanimously prioritised functionality over aesthetic design elements. But **they still had a view on imagery**.

This was **evident as conversations progressed**; initially apathetic participants became active in conversations about imagery.

Banknote imagery is an everyday representation of the UK that is so embedded in day-to-day life that it often goes unnoticed. Therefore, **many people do not initially think they have an opinion, but form clearer views once prompted** to reflect on something they had previously taken for granted.

In this context, **the Bank should not underestimate how much of a national 'discussion point' a change of banknote imagery is likely to be**, regardless of the imagery selected. It is a fundamentally interesting discussion that will likely become part of the UK's collective small talk.

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The two quotations below reflect the fluidity of apathy and interest toward banknote imagery. They **are from the same participant** in the Rural Communities group.

He prioritised functionality – and the value of the note – above imagery, which he initially deemed irrelevant.

Upon further deliberation, he concluded that it is important for a banknote to have imagery (even if the specific imagery is secondary).

Implication: The Bank should emphasise the public consultation process when announcing new designs, as participants want to feel heard on imagery even if they initially deprioritise it.

It's the number on it [the note] that I'd be more concerned about, like the 5 or the 10 or the 50. I think the imagery is completely and totally irrelevant.

– Focus Group 13 | Rural Communities

I guess the alternative is to have no imagery. And how boring would that look, a £5 on there with a serial number and a grey background?

– Focus Group 13 | Rural Communities

Perceptions of the current 'Historical Figures' theme

Spontaneous recollection of current imagery is low, and there is a desire to move away from Historical Figures.

Spontaneous awareness of current banknote imagery was low, with colour and denomination the main triggers for note recognition

Most participants struggled to spontaneously recall the specific historical figures currently featured on UK banknotes, with the **monarch and the denomination or colour being most consistently remembered**. Security features, such as **holograms**, were also top-of-mind, often cited before imagery.

When prompted, participants could name figures like Alan Turing, Winston Churchill, Jane Austen, Florence Nightingale, and Charles Darwin, but **these were rarely recalled unprompted**. This reflects both a lack of public resonance with the current theme, and the position of imagery in the hierarchy of prioritisation.

Many participants – especially younger ones – questioned the relevance of current figures, suggesting the theme feels outdated. There was a clear desire for banknote imagery to evolve and better reflect modern Britain by being more **inclusive**. For a minority, inclusivity meant different Historical Figures. For most, it meant a change of theme away from Historical Figures altogether.

Low spontaneous recall suggests that updating current imagery may be less disruptive than the Bank might anticipate. Nonetheless, colour and denomination are the primary drivers for recognition and should be preserved.

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“ I’m assuming that the [historical] figures have some sort of relevance to today’s times. I don’t remember which ones they exactly are. – Focus Group 2 | **Edinburgh** ”

“ I couldn’t remember what on earth goes on the back of any banknote. It’s quite unimportant to me. As long as it’s got a 5 or 10, 20, or 50 on it. I tend more towards big numbers and easily definable notes than imagery. – Focus Group 10 | **Older Adults** ”

“ What is important first is the colour, then the number, and then people are looking at what’s actually on the note. There was a lot of interest when the new King Charles notes came out, but it’s the colour that kind of sets the scene for the note. – Focus Group 10 | **Older Adults** ”

Participants were almost unanimous in advocacy for UK banknotes to move away from Historical Figures, which is seen as *elitist and divisive*

Only a few participants defended Historical Figures as a resonant theme that symbolises the contemporary UK. Most felt that **historical figures are potentially divisive, elitist, and disconnected from their own experiences.**

Although a small number (<10) of, often older participants, (especially in Manchester, London, and Northern England) groups wished to retain Historical Figures, even its supporters understand that figure selection can be contentious, especially among their younger peers. Intergenerational conciliation was a consideration for these participants.

To avoid alienating this segment, it is important that the Bank's communications strategy frames any move away from Historical Figures as a positive evolution that enhances banknotes, rather than a 'censorship' or 'cancellation' of history.



“

I would like to see more environmental themes and less people. I'm thinking about what my kids would like, if it's badgers and mice and things they'd be a lot more interested [in this than] historical figures, unless they're studying History. – Focus Group 14 | Working Parents

It does kind of still feel a little bit imperialistic, the notes, even Alan Turing, who was obviously a famous scientist, that is within the context of winning the Second World War. It does feel like there is that kind of boomer, imperialistic, you know 'we're the ones who won the Second World War and saved the world feeling' to the notes. – Focus Group 3 | Cardiff

I think [the imagery] should represent women and men equally, and should give a fair representation of the population. – Focus Group 12 | Mixed Heritage

Especially younger generations and future generations, they're much more cautious. We'd have to be very careful in people looking into the history and potentially contentious or controversial histories of landmarks and historical figures. I think younger generations are much quicker to pick that sort of stuff apart and find faults with that. – Focus Group 4 | Northern England

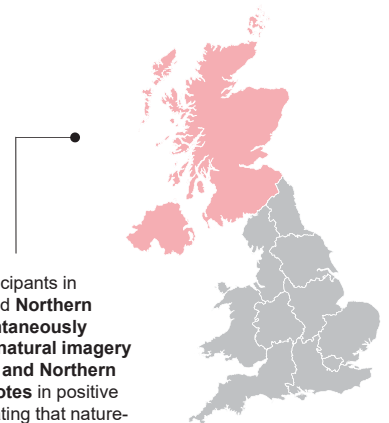
Spontaneous theme suggestions

Spontaneous suggestions aligned closely with pre-selected themes, and reflected the desire to move away from Historical Figures.

Spontaneous suggestions aligned with Nature and Architecture & Landmarks themes, and reflected a *broad desire to move away from people*

Spontaneous suggestions gravitated toward concepts that would later be formally introduced as the 'Nature' and 'Architecture & Landmarks' themes. These themes align well with public intuition about appropriate banknote imagery – and are seen balancing a desire to depict a more 'modern' version of Britain with respect for tradition.

Nature imagery	Landmarks	Refreshed characters
<p>The most prominent spontaneous suggestion, based on a belief that nature imagery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is politically neutral Can showcase the natural diversity of the UK <p>“ Very few people are going to get angry about the political implications of an otter. – Focus Group 2 Edinburgh</p> <p>We have such stunning countryside in the whole of the UK. Why don't they use something like, you know, the four highest peaks in the UK? – Focus Group 4 Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Participants who suggested landmarks often said they would allow the Bank to represent different parts of the UK in a way that would be instantly recognisable.</p> <p>“ Historic landmarks would be a good one. And I think that also raises awareness for different places in the UK. – Focus Group 5 Midlands</p> <p>I think it'd be better having sort of historical buildings, landscapes, that sort of thing, rather than individual people. – Focus Group 9 Leeds</p>	<p>A smaller number of participants suggested the Bank update its range of Historical Figures to include more contemporary figures, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir David Attenborough Freddie Mercury John Lennon <p>Overall, participants advocated a move away from people due to concerns about divisiveness and future controversy. Younger participants were most likely to initiate this point, but older participants tended to agree as well. Refreshed characters did not address fundamental concerns around divisiveness.</p>



Several participants in **Scotland and Northern Ireland spontaneously referenced natural imagery on Scottish and Northern Irish banknotes** in positive terms, validating that nature-based banknotes can work successfully in the UK context.

“
The new ones [notes] out here are absolutely gorgeous. The colours on them and the depictions that are shown on them you know, they show fields and countryside and things like that. – Focus Group 4 | **Northern Ireland**

Nature

Participants' preferred theme selection based on strong emotional resonance, ability to reflect the UK's natural diversity, and low potential for controversy – the latter is seen as a key selection criteria for the Bank.

Immediate reactions to Nature were very positive; with praise for its *neutrality and inclusiveness*

Participants reacted to Nature with enthusiasm, as a visually engaging, familiar, inclusive, and neutral theme. They appreciated its potential to represent the UK, and **intuitively understood that it is a sensible, low-risk option for the Bank.**

Participants also felt nature is relatable and reflects contemporary values, especially around environmentalism and climate change.

<p>01</p> <p>Wide variety of imagery. Many participants spontaneously listed the vast array of options (mountains, rivers, coastlines, national parks, flowers, trees, and native animals), enabling many different aspects of UK nature to be showcased across banknotes.</p>	<p>“</p> <p><i>I think we've got a wide variety of landscapes too and a wide variety of areas. So, we could represent every area of the country and represent Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well. So that would be good.</i></p> <p>Focus Group 14 Working Parents</p>
<p>02</p> <p>An uncontroversial 'safe' option. Nature was consistently praised for being a neutral, safe, and uncontroversial theme, welcomed by most participants as the theme least likely to upset, provoke, or divide.</p>	<p>“</p> <p><i>I think bringing in nature can take away some of the controversy and complications that come with public figures and things like that. So that could be a good avenue to steer away from those things.</i></p> <p>Focus Group 6 Southern England</p>
<p>03</p> <p>Boring or generic imagery. A consistent minority of participants (c.1-3 in most groups) identified a risk of Nature being 'generic' or 'boring', grounded in a concern that it may be difficult to select imagery that is exclusive and distinctive to the UK (especially compared to Architecture & Landmarks). This can be mitigated through a distinctive design approach (see recommendations Slide 42).</p>	<p>“</p> <p><i>It's a bit too generic, really, isn't it? As you say, [to make nature] specific to the UK, you'd struggle. If you're in Australia, yeah, [it could be easier]. But, you know, what have [the UK] got?</i></p> <p>Focus Group 9 Leeds</p>

Participants identified the strengths of Nature as its *potential to unify*, alignment with *modern values*, *emotional resonance*, and *endurance over time*

Participants found it easier to identify multiple strengths of Nature, compared to Architecture & Landmarks. There is a clear perception, across Focus Groups and demographics, that the strengths of Nature outweigh its weaknesses. Of these four strengths, 'unifying and low-risk' and 'timelessness' most directly address the Bank's selection criteria of 'not divisive' and 'enduring'. This makes Nature the safest thematic choice.



Unifying and low-risk	Alignment with modern values	Strong emotional connection	Timelessness
<p>Nature emerged as a unifying theme that resonates across all regions and nations of the UK, appealing to diverse groups and providing low risk for potential conflict or controversy.</p> <p>Participants spontaneously recognised this as a key selection criteria for the Bank.</p> <p>“</p> <p><i>Nature is much better suited to not excluding anyone and making everyone feel a valued part of the UK because it is not restricted to anyone. In contrast, images of cities or specific people could be alienating in some way.</i></p> <p>Savanta.com Mixed Heritage</p>	<p>Nature was also viewed as relevant to contemporary values, such as environmental consciousness, climate change, and biodiversity.</p> <p>Its presence on banknotes can signal progressiveness, provided it avoids greenwashing or perceived irony.</p> <p>“</p> <p><i>We could have a positive depiction of how we've gradually realised how important nature is. It's taken us too long, but we have finally started to see the bigger picture with how important these various environmental things are.</i></p> <p>Focus Group 3 Cardiff</p>	<p>Participants demonstrated a strong emotional connection to Nature, with natural imagery evoking a sense of comfort based in familiarity, and pride in the UK's landscapes and wildlife.</p> <p>This connection fosters a shared sense of national identity, free from controversy.</p> <p>“</p> <p><i>I think looking at nice pictures of nature or animals is good for your mental health, it helps calm you down and I think if that's on money that you're using every day, if it brings a bit of cheer into people's life, it's a good thing. I much prefer nature that's vibrant and encourages people to get outdoors.</i></p> <p>Focus Group 14 Working Parents</p>	<p>Nature imagery was often presented as a timeless design choice; unlikely to become controversial or outdated, contrasting with Historical Figures or Landmarks that may be subject to reputational reappraisal as new information emerges or societal values evolve.</p> <p>“</p> <p><i>In terms of what's going to be relevant, I don't think the features of our landscapes are going to change. The ecology might somewhat, but the staples of British nature like oak trees and robins are going to be around for the foreseeable future anyway. I think there are some pretty safe choices there.</i></p> <p>Focus Group 6 Southern England</p>

A minority saw as a weakness that Nature is too *generic or not distinctly British*, raising concerns about memorability and relevance

While Nature was widely appreciated, a minority felt that natural imagery on UK banknotes could risk appearing too generic or not distinctly British, raising concerns about uniqueness and relevance. There was also **some** perceived risk of irony given ongoing environmental and economic challenges, and potential for less relevance if landscapes or fauna change significantly in the future. **However, notably, a majority felt that even if environments or species change, nature would still evoke positive and meaningful memories.**



The most **frequently expressed concern, expressed by a notable minority in most groups**, was that nature imagery on UK banknotes could feel **generic or lack distinctiveness**, making it harder for them to stand out internationally. Others viewed Nature as a less recognisable theme than Architecture & Landmarks.

The Bank could mitigate this risk through innovative, bold design.

“
The only thing is, with nature is, as I say, it is quite bland and all-encompassing, but architecture and landscapes, they do jump out and scream, this country, this area and an ancient history.

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A few (isolated individuals in 2-4 groups) mentioned concerns that featuring specific species or locations could risk becoming outdated if animals become **extinct or the environment changes**. Overall, this was seen to pose minimal risk – other participants even saw it as a strength due to ability to raise awareness.

However, in order to mitigate this risk, the Bank should consider favouring common/stable species over endangered ones during image selection phase.

“
Animals die out in regions increasingly nowadays so I'm not sure if it's safe to have any particular animals representing any particular region because they're likely to change over the supposed lifespan of the note. –
Focus Group 10 | Older Adults

A few (isolated individuals in 2-4 groups) mentioned a risk of **perceived irony**, as ongoing environmental decline and economic challenges may cause the use of nature imagery to be viewed negatively.

It is important to emphasise that this was a very small minority view.

“
I worry about optics. Is it going to help anything at all you printing on plastic polymers which [aren't] environmental. It doesn't go together that well. I could see people picking that up and [saying] you're using these endangered species, but what are you actually doing about it?
Focus Group 3 | Cardiff

A small number (isolated individuals in 2-4 groups) of participants mentioned a risk of **cliché** with certain nature imagery, such as the daffodil for Wales or a shamrock for Northern Ireland. Some images, like the White Cliffs of Dover, were flagged as potentially **divisive** (see Slide 42 for guidance on identifying potentially divisive nature imagery). However, **overall, Nature has low potential for controversy beyond limited, specific images.**

“
I think you have to be a little bit careful because something like the White Cliffs of Dover could be seen by some people to be a political statement, particularly at the moment around immigration and small boats.
Focus Group 14 | Working Parents

National suggestions blend *nationally-recognisable landscapes* with flora and fauna that *transcend regional and national borders* within the UK

Participants emphasised the value in selecting imagery that every region can feel represented by – whether through flora/fauna with presence across regions, or through featuring a diverse collection of species/landscapes across the banknotes. As examples of this, participants often led with animals (e.g., birds-of-prey, red squirrels) to provide a compelling narrative around the UK’s biodiversity – particularly in the context of endangered species. Several participants mentioned trees, especially oak trees, as strong symbols of natural heritage and national strength, along with national flowers and field plants such as blackberries. Lastly, as the conversations progressed, more complex and rich sites started to emerge, such as the four peaks and expansive countryside scenes. **Looking at national imagery, participants most commonly identified the following:**



Giant's Causeway



The Lake District



The White Cliffs of Dover

While most nature images were viewed as uncontroversial, the White Cliffs of Dover was cited as potentially divisive (due to its association with the UK border).



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Mountains from each nation (e.g., Snowdon)



Iconic UK-wide animals (e.g., red squirrel)



National flowers (e.g., the thistle)

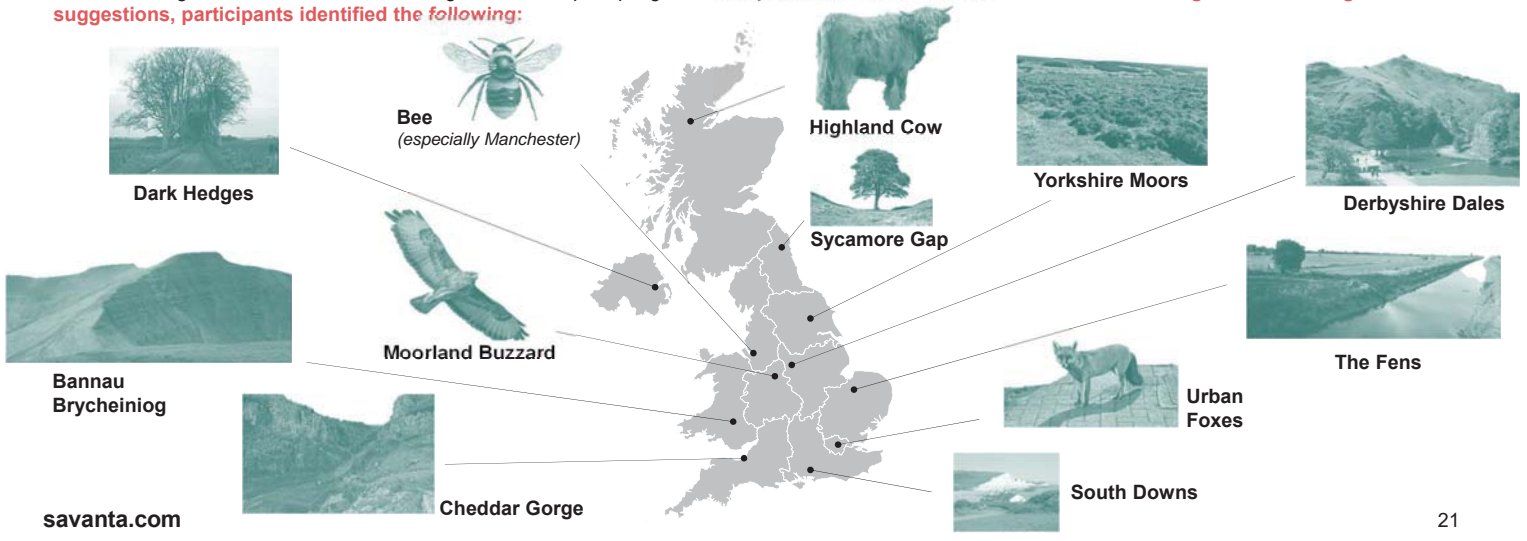
Question wording: 'Which Nature imagery would best represent the UK as a whole?'

Some suggestions carry recent cultural significance beyond nature theme (e.g., Manchester bee as resilience symbol). Consider whether these additional meanings strengthen or complicate imagery choice.



Regional suggestions centred on the value of *distinctive, place-based imagery* – so that each area of the UK can feel represented on the banknotes

Participants emphasised the importance of representing their specific areas and identities through unique imagery. Participants frequently cited local wildlife such as Highland cattle, red deer, puffins, and otters, although place-specific landscapes tended to have greatest resonance in terms of meaningfully representing a specific area/region. While participants regularly expressed strong local pride and a desire for their region to be visible, they were also widely aware that single iconic choices risk excluding other areas, prompting calls for equitable distribution across the banknotes. **Looking at local and regional suggestions, participants identified the following:**



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Question wording: 'Imagine each UK region can nominate one piece of nature imagery to appear on banknotes, what would you choose for your region and why?'

Participants want banknotes to reflect their *own regions*, but there's a clear need to *balance local pride* with fair, *UK-wide representation* in the final design

Pattern Analysis: What Participants Want

	Examples
Iconic regional landmarks	Sycamore Gap, Cheddar Gorge
Regional-specific species	Highland cow, Moorland buzzard, Urban foxes
Landscape types	Yorkshire Moors, The Fens, Derbyshire Dales

Design Tension and Design Implications



➤ **Regional Representation:**

- Participants desire recognition of their **local identity** - imagery reflecting their own area.

➤ **UK-wide Inclusion:**

- Awareness that picking only “iconic” symbols from certain regions risks excluding others.



➤ **Implication:**

- Design approach must **balance local pride** with a sense of **nationwide visibility**.
- (See Slide 41, Recommendation #6: Options for balancing distinctiveness and inclusion).

The Bank can celebrate diversity in the context of Nature by considering three key decision-making principles, underpinned by regional equity

Most participants felt Nature imagery would inherently reflect the UK's biodiversity and range of dramatic landscapes, yet there are two potential ways of approaching this: **a series of region-specific images; or a series of images that depict UK-wide flora, fauna, or landscapes.**

Consider all regions/nations. Banknotes should highlight nature from **across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.** Distinct natural scenes and species would celebrate the UK's geographic and ecological diversity, making each nation's identity visible and valued.

Participants recommended using **region-specific** natural imagery such as national parks, coastal landmarks, mountains, and native flora and fauna (e.g., thistles, roses, daffodils, foxes, and red deer) to highlight the **distinct environmental** characteristics of **different UK regions.**

For example: Dedicate each denomination to different nation (£5 Scottish Highlands, £10 Welsh coastline, £20 N.Ireland landscape, £50 English countryside).

Education and interaction. Several participants supported incorporating educational features, such as **QR codes**, to share stories about local wildlife, conservation, and environmental heritage. This would not only highlight natural diversity but also **promote greater awareness** of the UK's ecological reality.

“

You could have a landscape and then a QR code where you could scan and get that information. It might be a nice way to interact with a note and would give you a whole background to the image and the history of the image on the note. **Focus Group 13 | Rural Communities**

Note: QR code suggestion relates to functionality rather than imagery theme, but indicates appetite for enhanced engagement.

Embrace a range of imagery. Using **seasonal variations** and **timeless natural features**, ranging from dramatic **coastal scenes** to iconic **mountain vistas**, could capture the dynamic yet enduring beauty of the UK, appealing to multiple generations and celebrating diversity across the UK.

“

The seasons [idea] is lovely. It gives it a good feeling and shows you're thinking about the country that we live in and the beautiful seasons that we have. We have such a plastic society and tap in society and we're not talking to people enough, [this idea] it just brings it together.

Focus Group 7 | Young Adults

The 'four seasons' concept merits consideration as it provides a coherent narrative while allowing regional variety within each seasonal note.

Architecture & Landmarks

Positively received as a potential theme – especially among male participants. Instant recognisability is a strength, yet concerns around regional equity and historical baggage meant this theme ranks behind Nature.

Immediate reactions to Architecture & Landmarks were positive, but with concerns around *equitable representation*

Participants recognised Architecture & Landmarks as a visually engaging and familiar theme, appreciating its potential to represent the UK through imagery with historical and cultural significance. Immediate reactions saw national sites more commonly mentioned than local or regional counterparts.

There were, however, concerns that poorly chosen or generic designs could feel uninspiring, and a lack of regional and historical representation might undermine its appeal.

Older, male participants showed greater enthusiasm for this theme than younger or female participants. While further investigation would be needed to understand this difference, it suggests that Architecture & Landmarks has a narrower appeal overall.

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01

Broad recognition. Participants quickly connected with the theme and mentioned iconic sites unprompted, noting they are easier to identify than historical figures and resonate with a broader audience. Key sites were regularly brought up spontaneously (e.g., Stonehenge).

“

I mean, everyone knows Big Ben, everyone knows the House of Parliament, everyone knows York Minster, Everyone knows all the places that. The famous Stonehenge... – Focus Group 8 | Northern Ireland

02

Representing the UK. There was a belief among some that such imagery would stand out on banknotes relative to other themes, with this theme being seen as particularly effective in grounding the currency in unmistakably British symbols.

“

Most countries have something instantly recognisable. [...] If you see the Eiffel Tower, you know, you're in Paris. You know, Britain has loads of stuff like that that you can just put on. – Focus Group 1 | London

03

Apprehension around inclusivity. Participants across groups expressed concerns about whether iconic imagery truly represents the diversity of the UK's population and regions. There is a sense that using only universally recognised sites can overlook communities and histories that aren't captured by these, such as: urban populations who don't relate to grand, stately buildings; communities whose heritage isn't represented in 'classic' landmarks; and those who associate architecture with elitism/ privilege.

“

I realise that how much we're saying 'England' because it is the Bank of England, but Bank of England notes are used throughout the UK. – Focus Group 8 | Northern Ireland

Perceived strengths of Architecture & Landmarks centred on *resonance, instant recognisability, and cultural symbolism*

Participants found it difficult to elaborate on the strengths of Architecture & Landmarks compared to Nature and, despite a broadly positive reaction to the theme in general, discussed the nuanced weaknesses (see next slide) in more detail. This reflects that while responses to Architecture & Landmarks are positive, it is seen as a high-risk option if specific image selection is not conducted in a sensitive way that acknowledges the nuance. **While architecture has clear strengths, especially regarding recognition and symbolism, these must be weighed against relatively significant weaknesses** (see next slide).



Instant recognisability

Many participants highlighted the advantage of easily recognisable architectural symbols and landmarks.

This was expressed both in terms of **note recognition** during day-to-day use, and the identification of imagery as **unmistakably symbolic of the UK**.



[Regarding Buckingham Palace and Westminster] You don't have to like it to admire it and to know that it's instantly recognisable and in the wider world represents what we think of as particularly of England. – Focus Group 10 | Older Adults

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Personal resonance

Landmark imagery was generally seen as **accessible** and widely **relatable**, with many identifying with both local and national sites through personal experience, education, and everyday visibility.

This interacts with the 'recognisability' point insofar as participants recognise this imagery because they see it regularly – whether that's in person or on TV, etc.



I mean if they [banknotes] had landmarks, let's say Nelson's Column in London, you could go around and think 'oh that's there' – physically go and see it. – Focus Group 9 | Leeds

Cultural symbolism

Landmarks convey **multifaceted stories about history, regional diversity, and cultural evolution**, enabling a layered narrative that reflects the country's heritage and progress – encompassing sub-themes like industrial progression.

The theme also permits a blend of historical and contemporary elements that can evolve with modern design trends while retaining traditional significance.

Participants understood, however, that **cultural symbolism can be a double-edged sword**. While Architecture & Landmarks can communicate powerful and rich histories, it can also carry problematic historical baggage (e.g., sites with links to slavery), which makes image selection more challenging than the relatively less contested nature theme.

Concerns emerged around *regional equity and historical baggage*, with more participants identifying weaknesses with this theme compared to Nature

When comparing the key themes, Nature is most likely to be criticised for being too generic or not exclusive to the UK, while criticisms of Architecture & Landmarks focus on the historical, regional and cultural profile of the UK. Overall, while participants were positive about this theme overall, concerns were more vocal, consistent, and specific, relative to Nature. **The balance of Architecture & Landmarks' weaknesses to strengths, combined with the severity of its key criticisms (i.e., historical baggage, regional inequity, elitism), suggests this theme is the higher-risk option. If used, it should play a limited role (e.g., 1–2 denominations in a combination approach), and focus on the least controversial categories (ancient sites, industrial heritage).**



Many participants flagged **problematic histories** connected to iconic UK sites, with some noting that certain buildings were directly funded by the slave trade, colonial expansion, or associated with divisive historical events. Yet **the perceived weight of historical risk is uneven**, with ancient sites such as Stonehenge widely left out of these conversations.



There are definitely buildings in Britain that have been erected on the back of slave trade money and that might not go down well.

Focus Group 8 | Northern Ireland

There was some concern that sites can never be **regionally neutral**, with an over-focus on London most commonly flagged as a risk factor. However, this was widely perceived as an issue that can be remedied, e.g., through profiling one nation per note, or selecting a range of sites to visualise the regional diversity of the UK.



Landmarks are very much just regionally based, you know, and I think if you pick a landmark, there's going to be people who are not from an area who are going to be a bit annoyed that you didn't pick their regional landmark.

Focus Group 11 | Manchester

Participants were occasionally wary of images that might feel elitist or **unrelatable** (e.g., stately/National Trust homes). There was a sense that highlighting exclusive ways of life on banknotes risks reinforcing social divides and losing touch with the everyday reality of contemporary, working adults.



If you're having, like the Cotswolds with a nice thatched roof cottage on there, but, in reality, the cheapest one you can buy is half a million pounds and it's out of reach for your average kind of young person [who] might feel a bit downtrodden on that one.

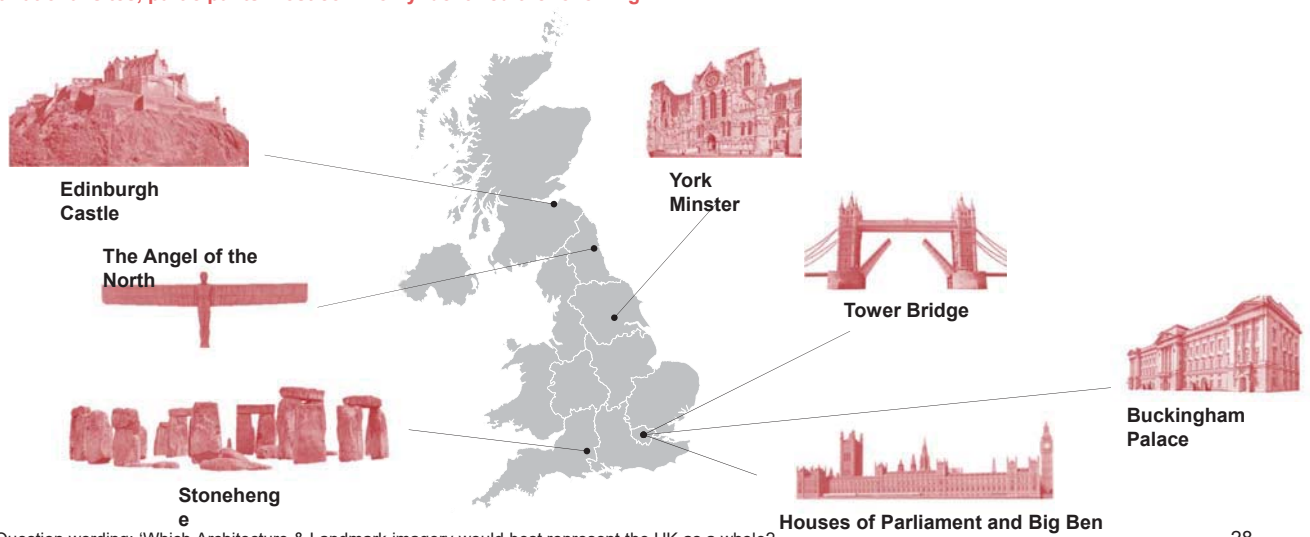
Focus Group 14 | Working Parents

For a few participants, this theme risked being plain and **monotonous**, with the prospect of seeing cliché landmarks evoking a lack of inspiration or interest. This concern was largely directed at specific site choices (such as Big Ben), rather than the Architecture & Landmarks theme as a whole. As such, this concern could be mitigated through less obvious site selections that profile local or regional imagery, but this may create tension with the 'recognisability' strength.

Some criticism was also raised around the **endurance** of Architectural sites, due to changing tastes and styles over time (especially relative to Nature).

National suggestions: Architecture & Landmark sites offer *shared recognition*, but have a disproportionate pull toward London

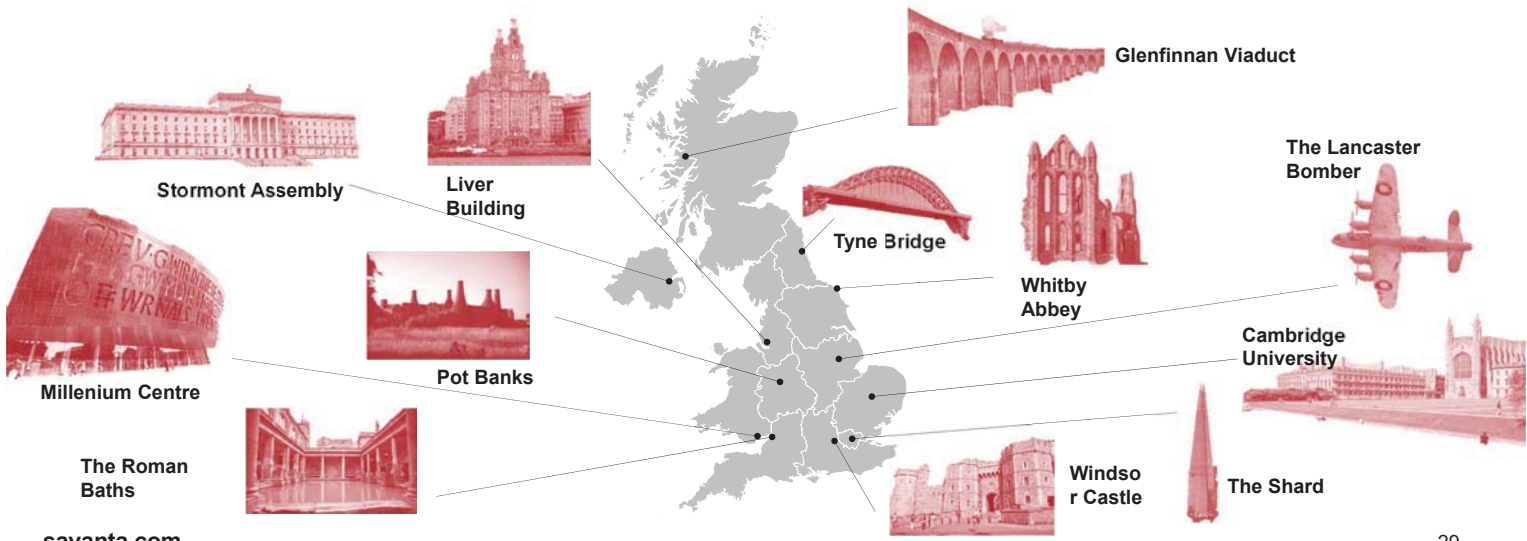
Sites seen as nationally symbolic (such as Stonehenge, Houses of Parliament) were valued for their instant recognisability and unique placement in Britain's culture/history. However, some participants noted that these choices can verge on cliché, lacking the local relevance or emotional depth found in regional icons. **Looking at national sites, participants most commonly identified the following:**



savanta.com Question wording: 'Which Architecture & Landmark imagery would best represent the UK as a whole?'

Regional suggestions: Architecture & Landmarks were *not viewed as monolithic*, with a wide range of examples provided across regions and eras

Participants rooted ideas in both local and national pride. Within this, overtly commercial or private sites are generally avoided, while structures with a distinct image are preferred. Looking at local and regional sites, participants identified the following:



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Question wording: 'Imagine each UK region can nominate one piece of Architecture & Landmark imagery to appear on banknotes, what would you choose for your region and why?'

The Bank can celebrate diversity in the context of Architecture & Landmarks by adhering to four key decision-making principles

Across all diversity-related concerns in the context of Architecture & Landmarks, participants most heavily emphasised the importance of **representing all audiences fairly**, so that banknotes are **accessible and inclusive**. There was broad recognition of the Bank having a responsibility to avoid **any** sectarian/partisan tension that may arise from showcasing architecture or landmarks. **The below principles develop a defensive framing that avoids exclusion rather than celebrating inclusion, with Architecture requiring more careful navigation than Nature in the context of meeting the Bank's key diversity objectives due to the contested and potentially divisive elements of this theme.**

Consider all audiences. Many participants highlighted the importance of representing less visible communities, whether by region, background, or experience.

Younger participants in particular were wary of traditional or "old money" imagery, which risks encouraging a sense of elitism or exclusivity to the banknotes.

This is often related to the UK's colonial history, with participants consistently flagging the importance of platforming architectural and landmark sites that visualise Britain in the 21st Century.

Reflecting contemporary achievements. Participants often called for sites that champion British achievements that have a widely recognised appeal. NHS buildings were raised here, in that they are widely celebrated and symbolise universal access. This suggests that contemporary civic architecture may be relatively less problematic than historic buildings – albeit with the risk of leaning too much into an institutional interpretation of architecture, that may be less recognisable than flagship sites.

I know that Westminster is instantly recognisable, but I don't think that necessarily represents what [...] we are currently achieving as a nation..

Focus Group 6 | **Southern England**

Plurality is key. There is an awareness that certain symbols (especially religious buildings or monuments with sectarian origins) could exclude or misrepresent parts of the population.

Suggestions to avoid this include favouring secular, public, or multi-purpose landmarks, or highlighting sites where different communities intersect and collaborate.

“

There's people with lots of different religions in the UK and we shouldn't just be highlighting, say, a cathedral.

Focus Group 7 | **Young Adults**

Consider spotlighting local sites. There is some enthusiasm for including lesser-known landmarks that could spark conversation around the cultural profile and variety of the UK. However, participants **also** wanted imagery to be distinct and recognisable, highlighting how the public's desires are occasionally inconsistent and contradictory.

“

I don't think it's as important to have something that's as recognisable because most people, if they think about, oh, that's British money, it's going to be because of the monarch's head on it, really...

Focus Group 11 | **Manchester**

Theme comparison and combination

While Nature was the preferred single theme, participants were open to thoughtful combination with Architecture & Landmarks. There is not a clear desire for banknotes to tell a 'story', but participants want coherence.

Participants expressed *a preference for Nature*, but many also thought Architecture & Landmarks is a viable theme

A strong majority of participants, across all demographic groups, expressed a preference for Nature. A minority (primarily older participants) preferred Architecture & Landmarks when pushed to choose. Most Architecture & Landmarks supporters acknowledged that Nature was the 'safer' choice for the Bank, even if it was not their personal preference.

Participants intuitively understood that the Bank's key selection criterion should be the avoiding of controversy or division. This suggests the Bank should heavily weight the 'not divisive' criterion in the final decision, which favours **Nature**.

Participants across segments expressed a **preference for moving away from Historical Figures**, citing issues with a lack of recognisability, divisiveness, and a dated representation of national identity.

Across all groups, only a few participants (<10) voted to retain Historical Figures.

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Many participants liked **Architecture & Landmarks** as a theme, especially men and older participants.

The Bank should not interpret preference for Nature as a rejection of Architecture & Landmarks, and some groups (Leeds, Northern Ireland) expressed an overall preference for this theme over Nature.

Nature was the most popular potential theme overall – ahead of Architecture & Landmarks – for its perceived universal appeal and timelessness, representing past, present, and future.






“

I guess you're looking for things that are least offensive to the most amount of people. – Focus Group 2 | Edinburgh

The thing they've [the Bank] got to take on board the most, which is the hardest thing because we've all had our own opinions, is pick the least controversial subject so they don't get a headache in the future.. – Focus Group 9 | Leeds

Nothing is going to be uncontroversial when you decide what four things to put on a banknote that absolutely everyone is going to use. But I do feel that nature is one of the least divisive things that you could you could pick. – Focus Group 12 | Mixed Heritage

There is nuance within the overall preference for Nature – participants thought Architecture & Landmarks better meets the recognisability selection criteria

Instant recognisability	Enduring relevance	Representation of all four nations
 <p>Architecture & Landmarks</p> <p>Participants highlighted the advantage of easily recognisable architectural symbols. Iconic structures such as St. Paul's Cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, Stonehenge, and regional landmarks were frequently identified as offering clear, distinctive visual cues that aid in rapid recognition.</p> <p>“ I just think [Architecture & Landmarks] are more visual from a lot perspectives. I think a lot of people would have either learned about them growing up or gone to visit. And even people visiting from abroad would have the same sort of experience. Whereas if it's nature, I don't think they'll be easily identifiable. – Focus Group 6 Southern England</p>	 <p>Nature</p> <p>Responses across segments emphasised that nature, embodied in landscapes, seasonal changes, and familiar wildlife is the more 'future-proof' theme, though there is a need for caution around depicting species that are at risk of extinction.</p> <p>Architecture & Landmarks are more susceptible to change in aesthetic tastes and reputational reappraisal – for example if it transpires that a building has links to slavery.</p> <p>“ It's [Nature] traditional and modern, isn't it? It's an ongoing thing. – Focus Group 9 Leeds</p>	 <p>Both Themes</p> <p>Participants cited the value of using regionally-specific natural imagery. At the same time, shared landscapes, flora, fauna, and natural landmarks allow for versatile imagery that transcend regional/national boundaries. This flexibility was seen as minimising the risk of exclusion.</p> <p>That said, participants widely found that the specificity of Architecture & Landmarks would allow representation as well. While rooted in specific, physical sites, participants identified ways of representing multiple areas of the UK within this theme (e.g., via each denomination).</p>

This comparison shows clear trade-offs. Architecture & Landmarks wins on instant recognisability. Nature wins on endurance. Both themes perform strongly in terms of representing all four nations. The question for the Bank is which criteria matter most. Given participants' emphasis on avoiding division, Nature's strengths on 'enduring relevance' outweigh Architecture & Landmarks' recognisability advantage.

There was *a desire for connected imagery*, but less explicit appetite for a series of images that tell a ‘story’

Participants struggled to imagine how banknote imagery would tell a ‘story’ **across the banknotes**, even when prompted. This suggestion often raised more questions, for example what happens if the final ‘chapter’ of the story is on a £50 note, which people are unlikely to have?

- **Participant perceptions of what constitutes a story varied**, with examples including: visualising each season, showing the UK’s progress through time, or simply highlighting four separate but thematic images (e.g., different flora and fauna representing each nation).

There was greater enthusiasm for a series of images that are connected thematically. **The Bank should not force a narrative arc across banknotes (e.g., ‘a journey through British history’). Instead, focus on thematic coherence – images that complement each other.**

Nature

- A series of **landscapes** (e.g., Giant’s Causeway, Loch Lomond, Bannau Brycheiniog, Cheddar Gorge)
- Autochthonous **trees** (e.g., oak, wild cherry, holly)
- **Animals** that symbolise the UK and transcend regional boundaries (e.g., Robin, deer, fox, red kite)

While these Nature sub-themes (landscapes, trees, animals) are all viable, the research does not indicate which is preferred. The decision should be based on design considerations, such as what offers sufficient variety across denominations.

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Architecture & Landmarks

- Landmarks that participants deemed ‘**prehistoric**’ and insulated from potential controversy (e.g., Stonehenge, Hadrian’s Wall).
- Technological **advancement and scientific achievement** (e.g., trains, industrial architecture such as Coal Mine Heads)
- **Regionally specific landmarks** (e.g., Edinburgh Castle, Angel of the North, the Houses of Parliament)



In 6/14 groups (Working Parents, Older Adults, Rural Communities, Manchester, Cardiff, Northern Ireland), participants spontaneously suggested the **four seasons** as the thread to connect imagery (whether Nature or Architecture & Landmarks). In each case, this was positively received by the rest of the group, seen as simultaneously representing continuity and change.

This is a notable convergence and suggests the four seasons would be a publicly acceptable sub-theme. It allows coherence within a common framework and variety (e.g. through depiction of different natural imagery within each season).

Participants suggested seasons could be aligned with colours, with the green £5 note for spring, the rust £10 for autumn, etc.

I echo that I think the seasons is lovely. It gives it a good feeling and also shows that you're thinking about the country that we live in and the beautiful seasons that we have. I think it's a warm thing. [...] it just brings it nicely together. – Focus Group 13 | Rural Communities

What I particularly like about the season is because we've got very various different colour themes, you know, across the four seasons and the four notes. – Focus Group 11 | Manchester

There was *openness to theme combination*, provided functionality does not suffer

Most participants who expressed a view were open to theme combination, believing it could ‘**cover all bases**’ by combining the emotional resonance of Nature with the recognisability of Architecture & Landmarks.

By the same token, a combination would help **address the limitations of using a single theme**. It should be noted, however, that very few spontaneously suggested a combination of themes. Furthermore, participation in this discussion (when prompted) varied, with a notable cohort of participants in each group not providing a view (i.e., around half). As such, if the Bank were to choose one single theme, it is unlikely that the public would view this as a major oversight or missed opportunity.

Several participants referred back to the deliberative element of the sessions, when they viewed banknotes from different countries. The New Zealand and Hong Kong banknotes were seen as positive examples of theme combination.

Yet support for theme combination was conditional, and participants had **three key considerations for the Bank**.

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OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

01

Retain functionality. Participants raised the risk of visual dilution, over-complexity, and challenges in maintaining a coherent and balanced aesthetic if the combination is not executed thoughtfully.

The message for the Bank is that functional design elements remain a priority.



As long as like the design language stays the same. So all £20 are like the same shade of blue. Like not one's blue and one's red, for instance, where it gets a bit more confusing. But you can mix up the pictures, it's fine. – Focus Group 8 | Northern Ireland

I guess if you knew like the fiver was a specific theme, then you might stick to that. But I think otherwise it could be maybe, perhaps confusing for some people if it changed from, you know, a landscape to an animal. – Focus Group 9 | Leeds

02

Coherent theme combination. A key recommendation was to create thoughtful combinations rather than randomly juxtaposing images. A specific suggestion was to link themes regionally. For instance, pairing a specific landmark with a local flower or animal that represents the same area.



I think you would still need to be conscious of not just putting two completely random things together. [...] Maybe if we put a specific landmark, we could put a flower or an animal that lives around it. – Focus Group 7 | Young Adults

National Trust is responsible for both architecture and nature. So for example, somewhere like the Lake District and Beatrix Potter's house [...] integrating nature as well as a little bit of architecture. – Focus Group 5 | Midlands

03

Mixed interpretation. Most participants interpreted ‘combination’ as multiple images on the same note, but some envisaged one note depicting nature and another depicting architecture. Participants saw the latter as preferable to avoid the note being too ‘busy’.



So I'm thinking urban landmark one side and natural history the other. So built environment one side, natural environment the other of the note. – Focus Group 6 | Southern England

You could have one that is flora, one that is fauna and one that's architecture or something. – Focus Group 13 | Rural Communities

Design considerations

There is limited appetite for a change of banknote orientation, and participants reiterated that functionality is the key design consideration ahead of imagery.

While respondents saw the *aesthetic potential* of portrait banknotes, usability is a high concern that limits its appeal

When comparing portrait and landscape banknotes, tradition and usability dominated preferences: **most participants preferred the existing orientation**, citing practicality for wallets, payments, and note recognisability.

Portrait designs, while seen as interesting or innovative by some, raised occasional concerns about confusion or requiring costly redesigns of everyday items and retail systems. Nonetheless, a strong minority saw creative potential in portrait orientation, especially for practical purposes such as displaying tall buildings or producing standout, contemporary designs.

Regardless of orientation, there was **consensus that the number and colour of banknotes must remain clear and accessible**, with this remaining the priority across the groups.

When shown existing portrait banknote stimuli, participants responded well to the designs of the Canadian and Hong Kong (HSBC) banknotes – but with a wider recognition that these wouldn't 'fit' in a UK context. In other words, **the challenge is not the design, but rather the fact that they represent such a radical change from existing the Bank of England approach.**



Key Recommendation: Retain landscape orientation.

Functional concerns (e.g., wallet compatibility and recognisability) widely outweigh any aesthetic benefits of portrait orientation. The minority who appreciated portrait banknotes also acknowledged usability challenges here.



Regional Consideration: Northern Irish participants were already familiar with portrait banknotes from their own banks, yet still expressed preference for landscape for Bank of England banknotes. This suggests portrait orientation not advisable even for those accustomed to it.



[Portrait notes] would be too difficult to find in wallets and purses. I think because you get used to looking at the same part of a note to see the number.

Focus Group 10 | Older Adults



In the wallet, they are all not portrait, they're landscape, and that's how wallets are and that's how you fish with them out. I don't think I could cope with the portrait at all. I don't know how I'd accommodate it.

Focus Group 5 | Midlands

Across all design considerations *note functionality* is key, and understood in three main ways

Recognition & Accessibility

For participants, **large, high-contrast symbols** (e.g., numbers and the pound) and **distinct colours** were essential for immediate identification, which is particularly important for vulnerable audiences such as the elderly, and visually impaired.

Tactile and size cues (e.g., texture, note length/width) must support quick and easy note recognition. Participants don't want their existing patterns of behaviour to be disrupted by new designs.

National Identity & Inclusion

Imagery must feel distinctly **representative of the UK**, with participants favouring symbols that are instantly recognisable and unique to the country.

Participants were also open to designs that celebrate the contemporary UK — whether through its diversity or national achievements (e.g., the NHS). However, tension exists between favouring 'distinctly UK' imagery, which often uses iconic or cliché symbols, and embracing 'the contemporary UK', which tends to invite less traditional images. Prioritising a contemporary interpretation is recommended to avoid the dated feel that undermined Historical Figures.

Representation across **all four UK nations** is seen as vital, especially by those outside of the London focus group. In general, there was broad pushback against London-centric design — particularly in the North and Devolved Nations.

Simplicity, Longevity & Functionality

Participants widely preferred a **clean, uncluttered layout**, with particular criticism directed at the 'busier' Swiss and Australian banknotes. This suggests a need to avoid visual complexity or storytelling that might confuse or distract from the note's visuals or usability.

Banknotes should always prioritise usability — for a great deal of participants, all aspects of imagery design are secondary. The public expects all security features (e.g., holograms, strips) to be present, as well as both functionally and visually feasible. These should be **integrated** into the overarching design of the note.

Key Overall Requirements:

- Retain current colour schemes (e.g., purple £20).
- Maintain or increase denomination number size.
- Preserve size differentiation.
- Consider adding or enhancing recommended accessibility features (e.g., braille, deckle edging).



“

If I'm pulling one out, I'll know that a five pound notes are, you know, a blue one. I'll just go by the colour more than what's actually on the note..

Focus Group 5 | Midlands

“

I think if it starts getting too complex and there's too many variations to the theme, we'll enter the world of not knowing what we've got in our pockets at some point. Just keep it simple, but not too simple to make it easier to forge.

Focus Group 13 | Rural Communities

Strategic recommendations

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39

What did participants want the Bank to take from this research? *Refreshed imagery that retains banknote functionality*

An updated approach to banknote imagery

'Refreshed imagery' means a move away from Historical Figures to a theme that represents UK's natural and cultural diversity with less risk of division. Implicit in this is a belief that the current Historical Figures theme does not achieve this; it represents a backward-looking vision of the United Kingdom that carries too great a risk of division and controversy.

Based on research findings, selection of **Nature** as the primary theme is the best way for the Bank to refresh imagery in line with participants' wishes.



The old school symbolism for the United Kingdom is not the United Kingdom anymore. [...] We've got to detach ourselves from the past. Yes, some of it is important, but some of it is very controversial now and very negative. And so we need to have our currency to reflect where so we can have a balance with some of the past. But we've got to modernise the symbolism, the imagery on the currency.
– Focus Group 3 | **Cardiff**

A continued focus on functionality

At the end of discussions specifically about imagery, many participants were keen to remind functionality is the main priority when it comes to banknotes.

New banknotes should retain key functional design elements (colours, clear denomination, distinct dimensions) and ensure that imagery does not compromise any of these.



If it's a £5, what is it that makes me realise it's a £5? Is it a big fat number 5, or is it a colour? It's got to be very simple. – Focus Group 11 | **Manchester**

Make them clear and concise. – Focus Group 5 | **Midlands**

Participants across several groups emphasised, at the end of the sessions, a desire for the Bank to 'listen to people' as part of an inclusive decision-making process. This reflects low awareness of the public consultation conducted in July 2025. **To build legitimacy for change, the Bank's communications strategy must emphasise that theme selection was led by the public and not a unilateral decision.**

Recommendations

01	02	03	04	05	06
Recognise that imagery is low on the hierarchy of design priorities	Be aware that imagery change will provoke discussion	Select Nature as primary theme for new series	Select images that cohere, but avoid a pursuit of 'stories'	Present change as something gained, not lost	Commission design exploration of how to represent four nations
<p>Participants prioritised other design elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colour• Denomination clarity• Dimensions <p>The Bank should avoid the compromising of these practical elements in the pursuit of aesthetics.</p> <p>The Bank should also be cautious about a move to portrait banknotes, with poor usability a perceived risk of orientation change.</p>	<p>Even participants who did not prioritise banknote imagery – or outright dismissed it as irrelevant – developed opinions as discussions progressed.</p> <p>The Bank should prepare for new imagery becoming part of the 'collective small talk' of the UK, discussed at shop counters and in barbers.</p> <p>It can prepare by mounting a positive case for the selected theme that emphasises public participation in selection.</p>	<p>Nature best meets the Bank's core criteria of being non-divisive, resonating with the public, and enduring over time.</p> <p>If the Bank prefers a combination approach, Nature should be the dominant theme, with Architecture & Landmarks limited to 1-2 denominations featuring least the controversial categories.</p> <p>Avoid Architecture or Landmarks with colonial-era associations, religious significance, or London-centricity.</p>	<p>There was no clear desire for the Bank to impose narrative on banknote imagery, in the sense of a series of banknotes that tell a 'story'.</p> <p>Yet imagery should be connected. This means images that complement each other – within a single theme or spanning Nature and Architecture & Landmarks.</p>	<p>Given the potential for a change of imagery to become a national discussion point, the Bank should present it in positive terms – as a contemporary reimagining of symbols of the UK, rather than a cancellation of Historical Figures.</p> <p>Alongside this, the Bank should emphasise the public engagement in this process, given low awareness of the consultation among participants.</p>	<p>There are three viable approaches to represent all four nations across denominations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. One nation per denomination.2. UK-wide, non-nation-specific imagery across all denominations.3. 'Four seasons' framework allowing regional variety within a coherent structure. <p>Based on participant enthusiasm, the seasons framework merits consideration.</p>

Guidance for navigating theme weaknesses during image selection

While Nature was the preferred theme, participants identified three main weaknesses: it could be too generic, depict species that may become extinct, and certain images may be divisive. The table below includes suggestions to mitigate each risk, as well as a risk categorisation of specific Architecture & Landmarks sub-themes.

Nature theme weakness mitigation	Architecture & Landmarks theme risk categorisation
<p>Nature imagery is too generic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favour endemic species or landscapes with a distinctively UK character.• Select images that work at banknote scale (clear silhouettes, bold forms).• Avoid imagery that could be 'anywhere' rather than specific to the UK (e.g., generic forests or mountains). <p>Species may become endangered or extinct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favour common or stable species over endangered species (e.g., a robin, oak tree, or fox rather than a red squirrel).• Select species that are indigenous to the UK – or have a historical presence in the UK – rather than recent introductions. <p>Imagery may be divisive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid natural sites with political symbolism (e.g., White Cliffs of Dover).• Avoid species with controversial status (e.g., game birds that are hunted)• Avoid sites with recent trauma associations (e.g., Sycamore Gap).	<p><i>If the Bank chooses to use this theme in combination with Nature, it should bear in mind the following risk categorisation of specific imagery:</i></p> <p>Lower-risk imagery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ancient or prehistoric landmarks (e.g., Stonehenge, Hadrian's Wall).• Industrial heritage (e.g., bridges, mines, railway architecture).• Buildings associated with contemporary civic achievement (e.g., NHS buildings). <p>Higher-risk imagery to avoid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Georgian/Victorian-era buildings due to potential links to colonialism/slavery.• Religious buildings.• Stately homes that carry a risk of perceived elitism.• London landmarks (unless balanced with landmarks from other regions).

Appendix

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Focus Group Composition

	Profile	Setting	Participants
1	London	In-person	7
2	Edinburgh	In-person	9
3	Cardiff	In-person	8
4	Northern England	Online	10
5	Midlands	Online	8
6	Southern England	Online	9
7	Young Adults	Online	8
8	Northern Ireland	Online	8
9	Leeds	In-person	9
10	Older Adults	Online	8
11	Manchester	In-person	9
12	Mixed Heritage	Online	9
13	Rural Communities	Online	8
14	Working Parents	Online	9



Savanta applied quotas to ensure representation by:

- Gender
- Age
- Social Grade
- Ethnicity

Nature – Regional Suggestions

- | | |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UK | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastline and Countryside • Four highest peaks • Seasonal imagery (e.g., spring flower) • Fox, badger, bee hedgehog, swan, robin, kingfisher, squirrel, deer, seagulls • Fruit e.g., blackberries, flowers/trees • Rivers, lakes waterfalls |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

North East	North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	East Anglia	South West
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sycamore Gap Tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lake District • Deer/Stag (Cheshire) • Bee (Manchester) • Liver Bird • Pendle Hill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peak District • Derbyshire Dales • Moorlands • Heather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Kites • Moorland Buzzards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fens • Oak trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durdle Door • Coastline of Devon and Cornwall • Cheddar Gorge, Exmoor, Quantocks and Dartmoor
South East	London	Yorkshire and Humber	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Cliffs of Dover • Kent as the 'Garden of England' • South Downs • Poppies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks and green spaces • Urban wildlife such as swans and foxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yorkshire Moors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Nevis • Lochs e.g., Lomond, Ness • Red Deer • Thistle • Wildcat • Otter, salmon, trout • Highland cows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowdonia • Bannau Brycheiniog • Welsh Coastline e.g., the Gower • Red Kites • Daffodil and snowdrops • Leek • Waterfalls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giant's Causeway • Seals, Puffins • Rainbow trout or brown trout • Waterfalls • Dark Hedges

Architecture and Landmarks – Regional Suggestions

- UK**
- Railways
 - Cathedrals
 - Canals, bridges, aqueducts
 - Castles
 - National Trust sites
 - Pubs
 - Coastal piers

North East

- Angel of the North
- Whitby Abbey
- Durham Cathedral
- Tyne Bridge
- Bamborough Castle and Lindisfarne

North West

- Manchester Town Hall
- Old Trafford
- Blackpool Tower
- Darwin Tower
- Royal Liver Building

East Midlands

- Lancaster Bomber
- Lincoln Cathedral
- Chatsworth House

West Midlands

- Stoke-on-trent pot banks
- Industrial Revolution infrastructure (canals, mills, potteries)

East Anglia

- Cambridge University
- Ely Cathedral

South West

- Clifton Suspension Bridge
- Truro Cathedral
- St. Michael's Mount
- Bath – UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Eden Project
- Stonehenge
- Roman Baths

South East

- Windsor Castle

London

- Big Ben and Parliament
- Westminster Abbey
- St. Paul's Cathedral
- Tower Bridge, Tower of London, London Eye
- The Shard, Barbican
- City Hall
- British Museum
- Canary Wharf
- Buckingham Palace
- Nelson's Column

Yorkshire and Humber

- York Minster
- Whitby Abbey
- Leeds Corn Exchange
- Sheffield steel works

Scotland

- Edinburgh Castle, Calton Hill, Arthur's Seat, Royal Mile
- Glasgow Queen St
- Stone circles (e.g., Callanish)
- Scott Monument
- Dunnet Head
- Wallace Monument
- Glenfinnan Viaduct

Wales

- Millennium Centre (Cardiff)
- Cardiff Castle
- Welsh dragon
- Slate mining sites
- Bridges e.g., Severn
- Old Bridge (Pontypridd)
- Cardigan Castle

Northern Ireland

- Stormont
- Titanic Building
- Silent Goliath
- The Big Fish
- Linfield Mills
- Belfast Cathedral Quarter

Summary of the reception of each stimulus tested

Note	Reception
Switzerland 50 Franc	Mixed reactions - seen as colourful and modern by some but criticised as too busy by others (especially older respondents). Concerns were also raised about vague mountain imagery not feeling obviously Swiss.
New Zealand 5 Dollar	Participants frequently praise this for its clear national cues (penguin/fern) and colourfulness, though a few found it busy or questioned the species' specificity.
Norway 100 Kroner	While participants appreciate national symbolism of the boat and vibrant orange palette, some find the more abstract elements confusing.
Canada 5 Dollar	Participants praise the clear colour and space/innovation motif, but criticise this for inconsistent juxtaposition of a historic portrait with modern imagery.
South Africa 10 Rand	Participants widely view this note as predictable (i.e., Mandela and rhino) but praise its detail and usage of animal imagery.
Singapore 1000 Dollar	Participants widely dislike the washed-out design, although some appreciate its simplicity and highlighting of architecture.
Australia 50 Dollar	Participants generally criticise this note for its cluttered appearance and lack of precision.
Denmark 200 Kroner	While participants praise the note for its use of Viking imagery/history, it is not a standout note for most due to its rather plain, straightforward appearance.