

Consultation Title: Scottish Borders Pilot Regional Land Use Framework

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Scottish Land & Estates is a member organisation that uniquely represents the interests of both land managers and land-based businesses in rural Scotland. Scottish Land & Estates has members with interests in a great variety of land uses and welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Question 1: Does the Framework document provide enough background information to explain the pilot project?

Yes.

Question 2: Are you satisfied with the process undertaken to produce the Framework?

Yes.

Question 3: Are you satisfied with the consultation undertaken to produce the Framework?

Yes.

Question 4: Are you satisfied with the content and clarity of the maps shown:

On the maps in general, Scottish Land & Estates would stress that maps are created on the basis of available data and sets of assumptions. Consequently, different maps could be created from different data and different sets of assumptions. We acknowledge that some comment on the origin of the map has been made and this is welcome.

However, the way that the map was created tends to get lost the moment there is an actual map to look at. Maps are potentially very powerful tools and have a power of their own. Consequently, mapping as an activity is often viewed with caution by land managers because once a map has been created it is not very many steps before it becomes authoritative and is then translated into new rules that constrain land manager choice.

As such, Scottish Land & Estates would stress that the maps should be seen as the starting point of a conversation between stakeholders about land use, rather than an end point in themselves. The important outcome must be the improved dialogue about land and potentially local targeting of effort in a rational way.

i) Do you have any comments on the stock maps of natural capital?

- Some of the aspects that the maps attempt to cover are difficult to map e.g. cultural services, and so of limited value.
- The renewables map only focuses on windfarms, which is limited. What of biomass, for example?
- The maps on biodiversity conservation and resilience are heavily dependent on multiple data sources and sets of assumptions (as compared to the more straightforward recording of cropping or livestock areas).

ii) Do you have any comments on the opportunity maps and key policy drivers?

- These maps do provide a visual representation of what would be expected after the application of a little common sense (which is reassuring).

iii) Do you have any comments on the interaction maps?

- Although they do tend to illustrate the obvious, some useful points can be drawn out of these maps to inform discussion about land use or to inform project work undertaken by government or NGOs. E.g. on upland flood management work

iv) Do you have any comments on the potential multiple benefit maps?

- These are most useful and could provide the basis for discussion and targeting.

Question 5: Are the mapped sets of interactions between different potential land uses (constraints on possible land use options) together with the maps of potential multiple benefits helpful in guiding decisions about possible land use change?

They could be, but everything depends on how it is done. This is an absolutely critical point. How the Land Use Strategy is taken forward really matters. The Land Use Strategy could be a constructive development or it could be a mechanism that serves to divide those with an interest in land. It could bring people together and provide a mechanism for breaking down the barriers that exist between different interest groups or it could alienate existing land managers. It is important that the LUS is constructive; it could be useful and many land managers would hope that it does provide a useful way forward.

Scottish Land & Estates would argue that the LUS should enable localised decision-making; it should be a starting point for people coming together to discuss land use.

It is very easy to see all the maps that have been produced in the pilot projects as the end point of the process; those maps could get enshrined in government and local government decision making and determine to some extent the options available to land managers. It is this mapping and the links to decision-making that concerns some land managers. But land use decisions are made by people. They make complex decisions in the specific financial, environmental and societal context in which they find themselves. Land use decision-making will always be a social process, not a mechanistic one determined by 'objective' data and modelling.

At the same time there is a cultural politics around land use decision making where people that are not actually involved in the decision-making also have a stake in the decision to some extent. This comes out most clearly when local communities are affected by land use change such as renewable energy projects, felling operations and timber transport, the closure of footpaths and it also comes out when thinking about issues around flooding in urban areas and the connection to upstream land use. Decisions made about land matter to the land manager because they have a direct impact on their business, but they also matter to others and all too frequently these issues flare up into locally contentious ones that split communities or groups of people with different interests.

So the Land Use Strategy could represent an opportunity. The Land Use Strategy, with all the interesting data that can be generated to inform decision-making, could enable different interests to come together to discuss land use, the needs of current land managers, and the interests of communities, so that perceived barriers are broken down and so that everyone can pull in the same direction. In this way the maps should not be the end point of the process, they should be a tool that can be used to kick-start a constructive process of dialogue about land and what it is used for locally.

All too often many of the disagreements and arguments come about because different parties in debates do not understand the other parties' point of view. What is needed is dialogue; an opening up of debate where the different interests get out of their trenches and seek to engage constructively.

At present, many landowners feel that they have to keep their heads down because they are politically vulnerable. But this has the unfortunate consequence of making them invisible. People in local communities may therefore find it difficult to understand what they are doing and why. If there was a mechanism that brought people together so that they could talk openly and constructively about what they do and why they do the things they do in the ways that they do, relations between the different interests in the countryside could be improved.

Dialogue could then enable local people to establish local priorities and discussion about how people might work together to achieve them. If local priorities could be identified they could be used to channel government spending and in this way land managers would be delivering what local people wanted to see. Land managers would know that they were delivering positive outcomes that were agreed locally and there could be an enhanced sense of cohesion with potential for positive knock-on effects.

Question 6: i) Can you give an indication of how you might use the mapped information? ii) What other elements might help make this easier for your use?

It is possible to see that some land managers may look to this data to add weight to applications for agri-environment-climate funding under the SRDP.

Question 7: Are you satisfied with the Interim action plan?

Much will depend on where the government decides to take the LUS, but if the intention is to seek to build on the momentum created by the pilot, some form of action plan is sensible to prevent there being a hiatus. Is there scope for one of the organisation – Tweed Forum, for example, to establish a localised group that seeks to bring people together to develop localised plans? We recognise that this has many challenges, but Tweed Forum would appear to be better placed than many to start such work. This is included in the Postscript as community led land use plans.

Question 8: Are you satisfied with the set of potential national, regional and local actions as proposed in the Postscript?

While laudable and ambitious, this appears less useful because it depends on many factors outwith the control of the pilot project partners.

Question 9: If your organisation is identified in Postscript actions, are there any actions in this list that you would like to:

i) be included in the Interim action plan?

No

ii) see removed from the Postscript?

No

Question 10: If your organisation is not identified in Postscript actions, i) are there any actions for your organisation that you would like to be included in the Postscript? ii) are there any actions for your organisation that you would like to be included in the Interim action plan?

No

Question 11: Do you feel that the proposals for Monitoring and Assessment of this pilot are adequate for the purpose?

Without a clear plan of action at the national level, the creation of monitoring frameworks would seem to be premature. There is also the issue of the degree to which the aspects monitored can be strongly links with the actions undertaken. Establishing agreed indicators of ecosystem health may be a useful thing to do, but what is the correlation with the actions undertaken in association with the LUS? If ecosystem health was not improving, it would appear to be difficult to attribute that situation directly to progress or otherwise on the LUS.

Question 12: Do you have any further comments you would like to make?

No