

Land Use Strategy discussion group

22nd April 2015, Great Glen House

Present: Nicole Wallace (Chair, Highland Council), Craig Bannister (Highland Council) Peter Wheelan (Highland Council), Drew Mcfarlane Slack (Scottish Land and Estates), Ian Wilson (National Farmers Union), Will Boyd Wallis (Cairngorms National Park), Rebecca O'Hara, (Scottish Natural Heritage), George Hogg (Scottish Natural Heritage), Marina Dennis (Crofting Commission)

Apologies: Robert Patton, Kenna Chisholm,

Actions:

Item	Action	Who
SEPA contact	Contact Susan Haslam for advice on who should represent SEPA	Nicole Wallace
Regional Strategies	Check Aberdeenshire and Borders final reports for lessons learned	All
Highland land use strategy project	Design a draft programme of preparatory work towards a land use strategy	George Hogg Rebecca O'Hara
Key priorities/issues paper	To clarify the existing key priorities/issues paper	Nicole Wallace
Land use positive interactions	To draw together examples of how different land uses interact positively	Will Boyd Wallis

Discussion:

1) Report on the Scottish Land Use Strategy

George Hogg has spoken to Sally Thomas, who is heading the Scottish Land Use Strategy team. She is aware of Highland work and feels that the approach fits their remit. At present it seems likely that Scottish Government will wish to have regional strategies, but it is unlikely that could be rolled out across whole of Scotland - so target those that feel they could most benefit from a regional strategy. The draft Scottish Land Use Strategy is expected to be ready for consultation in late summer 2015.

There will be an open meeting in Battleby in June inviting stakeholders to discuss the next Scottish Land Use Strategy.

2) Regional Land Use Strategies

Full details in paper circulated prior to the meeting by Rebecca O'Hara

Borders pilot - Focussed on land uses falling outwith the statutory planning system (agriculture, forestry, habitat management, biodiversity conservation) and on producing a local government framework. Mapping included current ecosystem services, and potential, and conflict areas - and multiple benefit. See http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/8397/lus_framework for their consultation framework

Aberdeenshire - Focussed on developing interactive mapping techniques of six policy areas. See <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/energy/AberdeenshireLandUseStrategyPilotFinalReportMarch2015.pdf> for final report

3) Open discussion

i) *Financing the development of a Highland land use strategy*

Potential avenue: through the Highland Community Planning Partnership - joint resourcing by the agencies involved. A draft process and costings estimate would have to be put to the partnership and Scottish Government.

ii) *Elements of project development*

- The process will need to be flexible, fluid, dynamic
- *Use existing information* to provide baseline information and mapping - avoid expensive new mapping
- *Agree a positive land use vision* - and ensure that it is robust enough to withstand challenge
- *Agree key issues/key guiding principles/targets for land use in Highland Council*
- *Agree criteria for assessing changes in land use - what's important, what would help decision making, what's acceptable/unacceptable change?*
- *Agree who the end users of the strategy will be* and how it will be embedded in decision mechanisms - for instance there is the potential to sit alongside and be statutorily adopted as part of development plan (supplementary guidance)
- Explore the overlaps between development planning and the land use strategy
- Focus on issues outwith the development planning process
- *Engage all stakeholders* to give wide ownership
- *Focus on priorities*
- *Agree what land use changes are acceptable and what are not*
- Take into account *climate change mitigation and adaptation*
- Be aware of *land use conflicts* and ensure that that the strategy helps to resolve it
- Understand *regional/local variation in land use* - e.g. Agriculture - between east and west coast, prime agricultural land vs agricultural land considered important in a local context
- Understand the *effects of new legislation/incentives* - e.g. new CAP may lead to farming on land that currently not used and a reduction stock to increase profitability per head.
- Consider the *potential for land use strategy to influence grants* - e.g. On Shetland agricultural payments encourage the keeping of native breed cows for biodiversity and community benefit
- Take into account what *national strategies* delivering on - and where there is room for improvement.