



LANDSCAPES 2030: STAKEHOLDER EVIDENCE AND RESEARCH NEEDS

JAN 2021 WORKSHOPS SUMMARY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Three workshops¹ were held on consecutive days with groups of stakeholders to gain an understanding of what the stakeholder needs and priorities might be in a future SPF bid around landscape decisions. The aims of the workshops were to:

- Move towards an understanding of the step-changes needed in landscape decision making to benefit the economy, the environment and society in the UK.
- Understand what new thinking and/or approaches are needed by organisations to deliver relevant evidence and knowledge in landscape decision making.

The first workshop was aimed at stakeholders involved in landscape governance, the second in landscape management and the third was aimed at organisations that represented end users.

After opening presentations from UKRI and the current Landscape Decisions SPF PCT that introduced the session and explored the context and current state of research, the workshops continued with two main discussion sessions followed by a summarising round up session. The two main context questions addressed in the discussion sessions were:

1. What step-changes are needed in landscape decision making to benefit the economy, the environment and society in the UK?
2. What new thinking and/or approaches are needed to deliver relevant evidence and knowledge in landscape decision making?

COMMON THEMES BETWEEN WORKSHOPS

THE MULTIPLE FUNCTIONS OF LANDSCAPES AND OPTIMAL LAND USE

Common themes included the need to gain a better understanding of the complexity of landscape decisions within multifunctional landscapes, balancing conflicting interests, maximising ecosystem services delivery and what the optimal land use is for a given parcel of land.

Future-proofing decisions by understanding how landscapes will change due to multiple pressures such as climate change and human and social interactions with the environment was seen as important. A future programme needs to recognise and include a broad range of values, including social and cultural as well as biophysical data. A new programme would

¹ 13th, 14th & 15th January 2021

need to provide adequate support to understand and integrate different issues and scales, and model the trade-offs between ecosystem services under different land use options.

MODELLING

There was a call for better stakeholder access to tools and models to understand trade-offs and synergies. A suite of integrated coordinated model chains or a multiscale modelling framework is high on the priority list. Joined-up modelling needs to work across scales, across sectors, and provide estimates of uncertainty to build confidence in decisions.

Understanding needs to be developed on what models are currently available (and able to give quick wins), and which models are the most appropriate to use including inter-model comparisons and standardisation of outputs. The latter also raises the issue of 'common currency' that would allow a direct weighting of different aspects of landscape decisions.

Outcomes need to enhance the usability of models and tools for end users, and improve the quality and applicability of outputs, e.g. visualisations of scenario predictions.

LANDSCAPE MONITORING AND EVIDENCE

There is a need for better monitoring. Combined with the modelling, a joined up, coordinated approach to monitoring across the UK is required to ensure robust input information for modelling is collected, to validate model outputs and to help with future model developments.

Stakeholders need integrated landscape assessments and standardised approaches to holistic landscape data that include more than just the national indicators, e.g. qualitative measures as well. There is a disjoint between scales of monitoring and scales of policy intervention, as well as a discrepancy between monitoring across regions.

Monitoring the success of interventions is also required (as opposed to just recording the implementation of interventions), including determining the longer term effects, recording what has been done in the past and what impacts are expected in the future. Much research evidence is dependent on long-term monitoring data. Long-term monitoring programmes, therefore, need to be explicitly linked into the new programme.

Long timescales are needed to assess the outcomes of landscape decisions. Stakeholders require evidence, from research or monitoring initiatives, and a review of how we fund, better coordinate and integrate both is required.

INTEGRATION

The need for integration between researchers and stakeholders was probably the overriding message from the workshops. Co-designing of tools and approaches, the interactive design of calls, ongoing science-policy collaboration and better bridging with the stakeholders and user groups are required.

The breaking down of silos between policy areas and research areas and true interdisciplinarity across sectors are needed. Good communication is a critical part of this -

particularly two-way knowledge transfer between stakeholders, policy developers and the researchers. A lot of work is already underway in the stakeholder organisations that is underrepresented or unknown in the research community.

There is a need for increased training of people with broader skills who can mediate between research, policy, and practice. Integration across scales is also important, between high level strategic decisions and individual landowners and users, and balancing national and local priorities.

LAND OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Who makes decisions for land? The answer (in rural areas) is mainly landowners and land managers. The role of people in the decision making process is underdeveloped, and the values they place on different possible outcomes needs to be better understood to be able to successfully incentivise them to make landscape decisions which have wider benefits.

TIMESCALES

There is a disconnect between timescales of impact and timescales within which decisions need to be made. We need action in the next few years (e.g. to achieve targets such as net zero). Timing is critical as we are at a pivotal moment for landscape decisions. Decisions to achieve short term targets might not support long term aims.

DYNAMIC

As our priorities have shifted, we need to recognise and communicate that a lot of ‘sub-optimal’ landscape decisions have been made in the past, with unforeseen consequences. Any future decisions may have time-limited benefit unless regular review, updates and modifications are implemented.

We need to shift to a co-production decision making framework with stakeholders that all recognise and understand that decisions will eventually need to be reviewed and likely modified.

We need to make data collection and modelling responsive to the pressing needs to monitor the impacts of people’s actions. There is a great deal of interest in the outcomes of decisions but we are not yet able to have the knowledge/understanding of those. The future SPF programme needs to be made flexible enough to allow for the funding of responsive dynamic research.

INTERESTING DIFFERENCES

Although there were many similarities between the groups it is worth noting the differences in the focus of the discussions, with the different types of stakeholders. Some themes were mentioned by all, but had more prominence by one group, others were unique to one group. The role of the organisations represented really influenced the discussion. This highlights the importance of how stakeholders are defined, which stakeholders the

programme wants to engage with, what the role of stakeholders will be in co-designing a programme and ultimately what the main objectives of the SPF proposal will be.

The first workshop was focused on high level strategic thinking, aligning research to policy goals and systems thinking. Themes of discussion included changes in the policy landscape in the future, how to prioritise multiple functions and multiple goals and the evidence gaps in the delivery of these.

The second workshop focused more on the integration between the stakeholders, policy-makers and researchers - bridging gaps, bringing people together and breaking down silos. There was more focus on the operational side of environmental and heritage policy making, monitoring and reporting, and the practicalities of making the right decisions.

The third workshop showed the greatest difference to the others and the broadest range of topics were covered. Inclusivity was a main theme of discussion, including the importance of views from a diverse range of stakeholders, and people without a currently recognised stake in landscape decisions. Education and the enablement of future stakeholders, multiculturalism, local and regional management decisions, communication and accessibility of models, the agricultural context and decision options faced by farmers were specific themes of the discussion.