

Cross Party Group on Sustainable Upland Management

8th February 2022

18.30 to 20.005, online via Teams

Minutes

“Sustainable uplands: what does that look like?”

Apologies from: Jenni Minto (MSP) Kelvin Thomson, Chris Wernham & Robbie Douglas-Miller

1. Introduction

This being the second meeting of the group, we are keen to develop the conversation, but first it is useful to have a discussion on what we think a sustainable uplands of Scotland looks like and what it has to offer.

To do that we have three speakers, who will touch on areas of the social, environmental, and economic factors in a sustainable future. The idea of this is to frame future discussions and provide a strong base knowledge for all. After all, three speakers have finished, we will have time for questions.

2. Rosalind Bryce

Mr McLellan introduced the first speaker. Dr Rosalind Bryce, Director of the Centre for Mountain Studies and University of Highlands & Islands.

Dr Bryce gave an overview of the work of Centre for Mountain Studies. Looking at all aspects of land management, also the broader range of societal benefits. She outlines the high expectations as to what can be delivered, housing, access, biodiversity as well as food and climate. These benefits also bring tensions, with a need for compromise and tradeoffs. Partnership working across academia, policy and practitioners can help achieve this.

How does upland management influence social management?

- Intensity of management
- Land Use Change
- Competing Objectives
- Engagement with land management decisions.

Dr Bryce ended by highlighting some of the opportunities for the uplands which had been outlined by their recent conference.

- Nature based solutions that contribute to human wellbeing and address climate and biodiversity challenges: sustainable tourism practice, woodland regeneration, community-based deer management
- Sense of place/place identity approaches
- Employment opportunities and skills/training
- Positive examples/best practice to build on e.g., South of Scotland partnerships (longer term funding benefit, benefit of integrated initiatives)

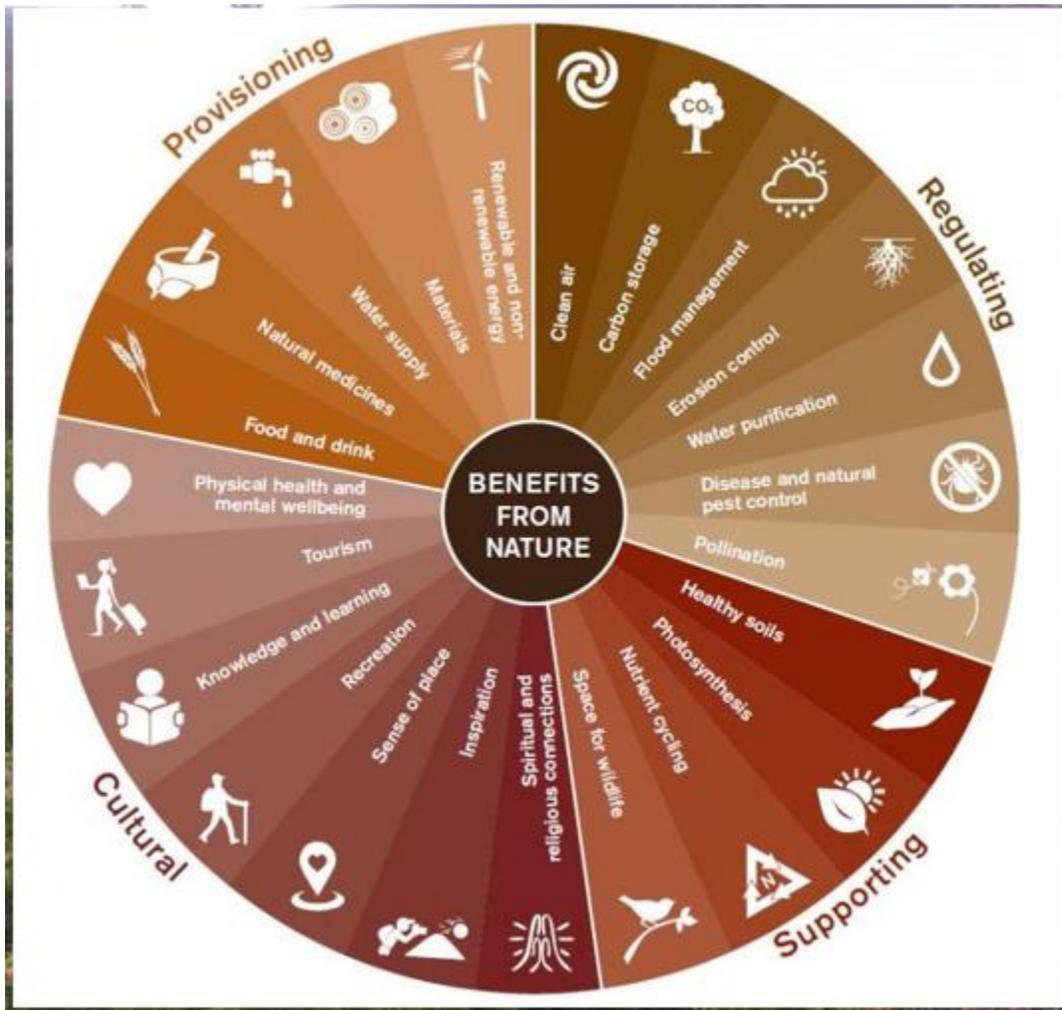
- Application of research evidence and innovative tools
- Generating wider benefit from upland value chains
- Growing value of nature and access to upland areas

3. Anne Gray

The second speaker was Anne Gray, Director of the Moorland Forum & Director for Scotland of the Heather Trust, develop thinking around moorland in terms of natural capital as well as wider environmental benefits for both biodiversity and climate change.

Ms Gray outlined the importance of biodiversity in the uplands stating, “Homogeneity is the route to extinction, diversity enables nature to deal with shocks”. This was followed by a more detailed definition of natural capital and ecosystem services, particularly how land is used, whether it is shared e.g., agriculture, peatland management & tourism, or spared e.g., simple forestry or agriculture.

Ecosystem Services Outline:



Measuring success is difficult, however there are tools and projects which seek to help with this and could play a role in future upland management decision making. E.g. Epi-collect, WES & NatureScot App attempting to provide a baseline.

There is also hope that Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUP) and Regional Land Use Frameworks (RLF) to be beneficial for landscape scale changes. Ms Gray finished with a plea for them to deliver real value and do the job of providing support to land managers to be part of bigger scale solutions.

4. Steven Thomson

Steven Thomson is Agricultural Economist, SRUC, on the economics of sustainable upland management.

Mr Thomson highlighted the benefits of High Nature Value Farming, where techniques can be used to deliver multiple benefits. Also, that the economy and people within it go hand in hand, they cannot be separated, and people are central to any wealth generation. He stated his concern that too much of the wealth and value from upland areas leaves the country, with the example of wind turbines often owned by foreign companies.

He went onto highlight areas where there were still significant economic opportunities for growth, including wildlife & recreation Wildlife & Recreation and peatland restoration which can also stimulate rural employment.

Upland farming is reliant on support payments; however, it also provides a wide range of benefits. If the support payments were to fall then so would the environmental benefits. Very little work has been done on local multiplier effects of support payments to understand the true value for money which they deliver from individual enterprises. Below is a table which highlights the income from differing land management practices in the uplands currently. [More detail can be seen in the full report.](#)

Impact	Walked-Up Grouse	Driven Grouse	Forestry	Woodland creation (15yr scheme)	Conservation	Deer stalking	Sheep	Renewables - Hydro	Renewables - Wind
Case study enterprises	4	4	1	3	2	3	3	3	3
Average annual capital costs	£10,465 (£2/ha)	£59,096 (£8/ha)	£173,000 (£41/ha)	£32,924 (£151/ha)	£153,815 (£10/ha)	£45,624 (£2/ha)	£16,341 (£7/ha)	£1.4M (build cost); (£93,444 over 15yrs) (£4,024/kW)	£89M (developer) costs (n/a)
Average running costs (incl. staff costs)	£61,247 (£11/ha)	£219,292 (£30/ha)	£102,056 (£24/ha)	£26,548 (£122/ha)	£480,284 (£29/ha)	£182,813 (£10/ha)	£87,019 (£36/ha)	£37,172 (n/a)	Est. £4.8-5M for larger examples (n/a)
Average revenue	£26,281 (£5/ha)	£147,916 (£20/ha)	£220,000 (£53/ha)	£63,039 (£290/ha)	£313,816 (£19/ha)	£87,826 (£5/ha)	£146,971 (£61/ha)	£192,280 (£552/kW)	£334,000 (£245/ha wind farm or £55/ha estate)
Hectares per FTE / average FTEs	4,685 (1.2)	1,446 (5)	4,000 (1)	n/a	2,100 (8)	4,005 (4.8)	1,793 (1.4)	n/a (0.2)	n/a (5)
Net balance (before capital)	-£34,966 (-£6/ha)	-£71,375 (-£10/ha)	£117,944 (£28/ha)	£36,491 (£168/ha)	-£166,468 (-£10/ha)	-£94,987 (-£5/ha)	£59,952 (£25/ha)	£148,878 (£428/KW)	n/a
Net balance (capital included)	-£45,431 (-£8/ha)	-£130,472 (-£18/ha)	-£55,056 (-£13/ha)	£3,567 (£16/ha)	-£320,283 (-£20/ha)	-£140,611 (-£7/ha)	£43,611 (£18/ha)	£92,606 (266/KW)	n/a
Average revenue (%) from public funding	0%	0%	47%	86%	79%	0%	66%	69%	n/a
Level of local-regional spending	Moderate /High	High	Low/ Moderate	Low /Moderate	Moderate /High	High	High	Moderate /High	Moderate
Revenue per £1 spent	£0.43	£0.67	£2.15	£2.37	£0.65	£0.48	£1.69	£1.93 (£4.43)	n/a

Mr Thomson went on to highlight that carbon markets, while an opportunity were also a potential threat. With supply chains keen to see carbon offset, it could be a risk to sell of carbon credits, potentially leaving your own business short in future. There is also the need to demonstrate additionality which makes it difficult to derive income from restored peatlands. There are also unintended consequences with land prices being pushed up due to potential incomes.

Q&A

A range of questions were asked of the speakers. A summary is below.

Q for Anne Gray, Sustainable development – does the imbalance of commercial forestry is this an example of delivering short term needs, but compromising the long term, soil health, communities etc?
AG – Agree, there needs to be a balance between all of these issues considered.

Q. How do we balance community and society benefit. Can we find a way for communities to benefit from major investments?
RB – Agree that is one of the trade off, range of models of community engagement, ownership, and part ownership.

Q. Policy Landscape – NPF4 in background, RLUPs – what is the hierarchy of legislation. What is the connectivity between practicalities and policy?
RB – Agree we need to map out the policy landscape –
ST, SRUC have funding to undertake this work. Partnerships all need leadership, its not clear who is going to lead this. Or which policy will have primacy

Mr McLennan asked for input from the group on potential topics to focus on for future meetings. Below is a summary of these suggestions. The group were asked to contact the secretariat with any further thoughts.

- RLUPs – progress report.
- Policy objectives for Rural Scotland – still not clear. What should the uplands deliver for public money?
- Land Reform – the totality of public money into rural land and the benefits. Land Values – will restrict access to property rights.
- How do we map where public money goes? How do we capture money for rural communities?
- Skills and young people, sustainable livelihoods. What new skills will be required?

Work to be done prior to next group includes work across cross party groups to reduce potential for duplication and ensure value and outcomes are strong.

Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 10th May 6.30pm.

Attendees:

Paul McLennan MSP

Alexander Burnett MSP

Finlay Carson MSP

Brian Whittle MSP

Jenny Minto MSP

Jim Fairlie MSP

Anne Gray, Heather Trust/ Moorland Forum
(Speaker)

Steven Thomson, SRUC (Speaker)

Rosalind Bryce, UHI (Speaker)

Andy Ford, CNPA

Ashley Aitken

Chris Miles, SUP

Claudia Rowse, NatureScot

Conor Beale

Davy McCracken, SRUC

Hannah Barker, NFUS

Ian THOMSON, RSPB

Jen Craig, NSA

Joan Mitchell, Southern Upland Partnership
(SUP)

Martin Kennedy, NFUS

Max Wiszniewski

Jake Swindells, CA

Mike Daniel, John Muir Trust

Patrick Krause, Scottish Crofters Fed

Ross Ewing, BASC

Tim Baynes, SLE

Tom Turnbull, ADMG