



South of Scotland Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) pilot: review of existing partnerships and their links to the proposed pilot

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9 May 2022



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH



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Acronyms

<i>BFT</i>	<i>Borders Forest Trust</i>	<i>RLUF</i>	<i>Regional Land Use Framework</i>
<i>BGD</i>	<i>Borderlands Growth Deal</i>	<i>RLUP</i>	<i>Regional Land Use Partnership</i>
<i>DGC</i>	<i>Dumfries and Galloway Council</i>	<i>RSS</i>	<i>Regional Spatial Strategy</i>
<i>LENS</i>	<i>Landscape Enterprise Networks</i>	<i>SBC</i>	<i>Scottish Borders Council</i>
<i>LUS</i>	<i>Land Use Strategy</i>	<i>SCIO</i>	<i>Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation</i>
<i>NPF4</i>	<i>National Planning Framework</i>	<i>SEPA</i>	<i>Scottish Environmental Protection Agency</i>
<i>REP</i>	<i>Regional Economic Partnership</i>	<i>SoS</i>	<i>South of Scotland</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Regional Economic Strategy</i>	<i>SOSE</i>	<i>South of Scotland Enterprise</i>
<i>PMO</i>	<i>Project Management Organisation</i>	<i>TOR</i>	<i>Terms of Reference</i>

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Summary

This report summarises research carried out to support the development of the South of Scotland Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) programme, being led by South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC). The research aimed to detect and evaluate existing partnerships in the South of Scotland that are relevant to RLUPs, and determine how the RLUP might work alongside them. The findings are based on a desk review and interviews with thirteen partnerships operating at regional, sub-regional and local scales in the region. The work aims to support initial discussions about the governance structure of the South of Scotland RLUP pilot. The main findings are summarised below.

Existing partnership landscape

There are a number of key partnerships in the region that are focussed on, and have landscape scale influence over, land use¹ that the RLUP will need to collaborate with.

These include: Borderlands Growth Deal; the Regional Economic Partnership; Borders Forest Trust; Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere; Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership²; Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENS); Solway Firth Partnership; Southern Uplands Partnership; and Tweed Forum. Many of these have overlapping partner membership and already collaborate with each other.

A distinction can be drawn between strategic partnerships and those implementing activities on the ground. The RLUP could draw on this distinction in its governance structure, communications and in managing its relationship with existing initiatives, as has been the approach used by some catchment partnerships.

Partnership governance structures vary in terms of details such as their scale, how Board members are selected and the role of supporting groups such as advisory or working groups. However, only a small range of governance models is used. One of the key variables relates to the size of the Board and the role of supporting groups in decision making, with some interviewees suggesting that from their experience a smaller Board supported by a wider group of partners with a role in decision making is preferable. Many existing partnerships operate in the Third Sector and follow a two-tier Scottish Incorporated Charitable Organisation (SCIO) structure.

The details of decision making processes in existing partnerships are often difficult to determine. For example, the relationship between Boards and advisory groups is often unclear, as are mechanisms for addressing conflict within partnership structures.

Few partnerships have their own large-scale spatial plans or are involved in spatial planning across multiple land owners. However, a number have supported more strategic land use planning processes and/or are trying to work in a coordinated way across multiple land owners/managers, which will be relevant for RLUPs.

Few partnerships are implementing natural capital/ecosystem-based approaches to land use planning or have in-house expertise in this area. A number have experience in these approaches that will be useful in RLUP development. A number also mentioned new

¹ “Land use” includes “Land management” throughout unless stated otherwise.

² This project will complete in September 2023 - links could be made between the RLUP and any potential successor or legacy projects.

natural capital focussed projects that are in their early stages or planned that could feed into the RLUF.

Resourcing levels are extremely variable among partnerships. Most have budgets <£2 million, with little core or long term finance (>5 years). Most funding is from public sources, although a limited number of initiatives are successfully attracting private investment. Costs to managing partnerships are significant, requiring support for multiple staff members for the larger strategic partnerships or those implementing capital projects on the ground, along with significant time input from members of the partnership.

The monitoring and evaluation of impact by partnerships is often unclear. The RLUP will need to consider how it supports monitoring and evaluation of existing initiatives if they are involved in implementation. Existing programmes, such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscapes Partnerships could provide useful insights for M and E of the RLUP/RLUF.

Perspectives on RLUPs among existing partnerships

Existing initiatives are generally supportive of the idea of RLUPs but concerned about many of the details. Key issues include concerns about the potential lack of powers to influence regulatory and financial instruments, breadth of scope, and how the RLUP will overcome deep polarisation between stakeholders in practice.

Existing initiatives see potential added value of the RLUP in the following areas:

- Developing a strategic vision for regional land use
- Helping to coordinate existing and future policies and instruments influencing land use
- Providing a regional level forum for discussions about land use
- Providing a more focussed voice for the region to influence central government policy
- Providing mechanisms to facilitate compromise

To demonstrate its added value, the RLUP will need to articulate clearly how it differs from other governance structures and policy processes that exist in the region, particularly the relationship to NPF4 and work led by the statutory agencies.

Collaboration between the RLUP and existing partnerships

Existing partnerships with a land use or environmental focus are keen to engage with the RLUP at the highest level, whilst those in other sectors would envisage collaborating mainly in an advisory or consultative capacity.

Existing partnerships need to be attracted to collaborate given limited resources.

Specifically this means the RLUP having:

- A clear purpose, clarity over the added-value and a long-term outcome-based vision
- A core funding resource for coordination
- Influence over regulations or incentives that can influence land use

A number of partnerships would be interested in helping with RLUP implementation and suggested ways in which they could use their structures to engage with stakeholders on the ground. They also suggested that the RLUP would be most useful in setting the strategic vision and a flexible framework for them to work within.

Consider using existing regional level governance structures to avoid duplication. A number of interviewees suggested that regional bodies such as the REP and SOSE are an obvious 'home' for the RLUP and a formal relationship between the REP and the RLUP

should be explored. However, they also suggested key issues with these structures that would need to be addressed in order for them to work effectively with existing initiatives.

Consider establishing an interim governance structure to determine the purpose of the RLUP before finalising the governance structure.

There are concerns about the scale of the RLUP and representation across such a wide region. A number of interviewees suggested that the RLUP could incorporate structures, such as eastern and western advisory groups that help to address this issue.

Implications for the RLUP governance structure in practice

Insights from analysis of existing partnership structures, combined with perspectives shared by interviewees, suggest two potential options for the RLUP governance structure:

- **Option 1:** A single Board of around 16 representatives, supported by a small Secretariat, and potentially supported by ad-hoc Working Groups that play a purely advisory role on specific issues.
- **Option 2:** A two-tier structure with a smaller Board (6-10 representatives), a larger advisory group (~20 representatives), and potentially a wider membership, resembling a number of existing partnerships operating in the third sector. The advisory group would hold delegated powers over decision making and the wider membership could play a role in electing certain representatives of the Board and advisory group. As in option 1, the Board/Advisory Group could be supported by ad-hoc Working Groups that play a purely advisory role on specific issues.

The RLUP should consider a two-tier governance structure (option 2) keeping the Board small whilst enabling inputs to decision making from a wider membership. The larger scale of the decision making body would help achieve balanced representation across the broad geographic and sectoral scope of the partnership. It would also help to increase representation from existing partnerships in the region. Alternatively, if a simpler single-tier structure is used, it would be valuable to draw insights from the two-tier structure where possible, for example around the procedures for involving advisory groups and wider stakeholders.

1 Objective

The objective of this work was to support the South of Scotland (SoS) RLUP pilot in its Phase 1 Grant Agreement activities agreed with the Scottish Government, specifically to:

“Detect and evaluate partnership and collaborative working arrangements already in place in the region, and determine how the RLUP pilot will work alongside these.”

The detailed objectives, following discussion with the SoS Steering Group were to:

1. Understand what partnerships and collaborative initiatives exist in the region
2. Identify key initiatives to work with
3. Identify how the RLUP might work with these initiatives

The findings aim to feed into discussions and decisions about the governance structure of the RLUP pilot, and be used by the initial partnership Board as they begin to consider how they work with existing partnerships in the region.

2 Methodology

The work was divided into three parts based on the objective defined above:

1. Detection, or mapping of existing partnership landscape in the region.
2. Evaluation of how these partnerships operate.
3. Determination of existing partnership perspectives on the proposed RLUP and how they might collaborate with the RLUP.

For the purposes of this work “partnerships” and “collaborative initiatives” were defined as “multi-stakeholder groups working collaboratively, over the long-term and guided by a partnership agreement, to deliver shared objectives”. The terms “partnership” and “collaborative initiative” are used interchangeably in this report. The focus was on partnerships and initiatives as entities involved in implementation of policy, rather than policies themselves (covered in policy mapping work by Land Use Consultants), although recognising that many policies drive coordination. Implementation was broadly interpreted, ranging from partnerships formed to encourage discussion, share knowledge and influence decision makers, to partnerships planning and delivering projects ‘on the ground’.

Initially a long list of partnerships was drawn up by the author (Section 7.1), based on knowledge of the region, a web search and inputs from the Steering Committee. This long list of partnerships covered three different scales (Regional (across SoS); sub-regional (Local Authority or large river catchment); local (smaller initiatives, e.g. multi-farm)) and a broad scope (primarily land use partnerships but also economic development, tourism, investment, coastal and marine partnerships). Information on each of the initiatives was captured based on a desk review of websites, partnership terms of reference, annual reports and business plans. The review captured information about the scope, scale, governance structure, engagement methods, activities, financing and review mechanisms, where such information was available (Table 1).

A shortlist of partnerships for more detailed evaluation was drawn up, with the aim of sampling a set of partnerships working at different scales and in different sectors within the region. Shortlisting also took into account the potential relevance of the initiative to RLUPs, the legitimacy and stability of the initiative, and current influence. The final shortlist of 13 partnerships was agreed by the Steering Group (Table 2).

Table 1: Template for capturing information on different partnerships.

Attribute	Description
Scope	Scope refers to the range and types of resource-related issues and concerns included and addressed.
Scale	Scale concerns the spatial scale or scales at which governance is intended to operate.
Responsibility	Responsibility refers to how functions, responsibilities, and powers are determined and allocated among governing institutions.
Engagement	Engagement concerns how organizations and groups are involved in governance arrangements, including their participation through cross-scale and inter-jurisdictional relationships.
Instruments	Types of approaches partnership uses to plan and influence land use decision making
Financing	Financing refers to how funding is generated and allocated to enable governance arrangements to operate, and to implement policies, programmes, and projects.
Review	Review processes and mechanisms concern the various ways in which governance arrangements might be assessed and potentially adjusted on the basis of experience, learning, and changing circumstances and needs.

Semi-structured key informant interviews were used as the basis for understanding how the shortlisted partnerships are working and how they might work alongside the RLUP. Information from the mapping work was used to create a pro-forma for each partnership, and this was used as a basis for asking targeted questions about the operation of the partnership in order to clarify understanding.

The second part of the interview focussed on the question of how the RLUP might work alongside existing partnerships. Key questions included:

1. What do you think of the draft aim and function of the partnership? (Outlined in a paragraph provided by SOSE prior to the interview – see section 3.3.1)
2. Where could the RLUP add value to what you're already doing/what's happening in the region?
3. How would you envisage collaborating with the RLUP?
4. What structures do you think would be most useful for collaboration with the RLUP?
5. What is needed to ensure the RLUP is a success?

The semi-structured approach enabled a focussed discussion on each of these questions as well as the potential to explore any particularly important points.

Table 2: Shortlist of partnerships interviewed

Scale	Name
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal • Regional Economic Partnership • Southern Uplands Partnership • Tweed Forum • South of Scotland Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd. (SAOS) • South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA)
Sub-regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGC Access Trust • Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere • Solway Firth Partnership • River Tweed Commission
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langholm Initiative • Borders Forest Trust • Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership

3 Findings

The sections below outline the main findings from the research. A brief summary of the existing partnership landscape in the region is given first, followed by sections based on the desk review and interviews outlining in more detail how partnerships work, and their views on working alongside the RLUP.

3.1 Existing partnership landscape

Forty-six partnerships of potential relevance to RLUPs were identified to be operating in the region. Eight of these were operating at regional level, twenty at sub-regional level and eighteen at local level.

The sub-regional partnerships have a range of boundaries defined by land holdings, community boundaries, river catchment boundaries and landscape characteristics (e.g. coastal areas). Defining the scope of partnership activities is challenging, given that they often cover a range of different issues. However, many partnerships have a focal area. Of those identified in the search, the majority were community partnerships and environmental partnerships. Both of these categories cover a broad range of issues. Community partnerships cover many local issues for example around health, local economic development and planning. Environmental partnerships range from the natural environment to areas such as energy.

There are a number of partnerships focussed more specifically on land use and with landscape scale influence, including:

- Borders Forest Trust
- Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere
- Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership
- Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs) [potentially high impact, though in early stages of implementation]
- Solway Firth partnership
- Southern Uplands Partnership
- Tweed Forum

3.2 How are existing partnerships operating in the region?

3.2.1 Governance

There is limited diversity in structures for allocating responsibilities among partners across the partnerships reviewed. Governance structures are in most cases broadly similar to standard programme management approaches and outlined in legal documentation on organisational structure (e.g. a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005). Most comprise a Board, and depending on their size, a Delivery team, Steering Committees and/or Working Groups with broader membership that guides the work of the partnership³.

- Boards: Boards comprise elected members and appointed members, particularly in the statutory partnerships. The size of the Board for the partnerships reviewed ranges between six and thirty members, with larger Boards in the larger partnerships. Individual project Boards have been established in some of the larger initiatives to oversee the delivery of these projects.

³ Note that the terminology around these different bodies varies between partnerships

- Working groups/Advisory groups: Separate working groups and/or advisory groups are created by some partnerships to address particular issues. Where details of these groups are provided, it is not normally clear what their role in decision making is, although the implication is that their inputs are informal, with decision making restricted to the Board.
- Delivery team: The size of delivery team varies from a part-time staff member up to a team of ten, depending on resourcing. The delivery team is often staffed by one of the partners, although in larger partnerships an independent organisation is established (though this was not the case in most of the partnerships reviewed in SoS). Waylen et al. 2021 found that the “capacity and skills and resources for organising, administering, communicating and connecting – activities that are the responsibility of the coordinator” are the single most important factor for partnership success. One of the interviewees made a similar point in relation to their own partnership, citing challenges of dealing with high staff turnover among partners and the need for a strong coordination manager to build and keep track of relationships in order to maintain continuity.

Figure 1 outlines the structures of some of the larger and most relevant partnerships operating in the region, as examples of their operation.

Partnership legal structures vary with their scope and scale. For example, the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere is currently updating its constitution and considering a change in structure to have better lines of transparency and accountability, either by developing its current position as a two tier SCIO (Box 1) or moving to a single tier SCIO. A single tier SCIO makes all of its decisions internally, whilst a two-tier SCIO has a wider membership that can feed into decision making.

Box 1: One and two-tier Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIOs)

While the context is different to that of RLUPs, Scottish charity law provides an example of different approaches to managing accountability between the members of a partnership (or charity) and those running such initiatives. SCIOs can be either single or two-tier. “In a single-tier SCIO, the same individuals are both members and charity trustees, and there’s no wider membership that can vote at an AGM. Whilst charity law and SCIO regulations allow for a single-tier SCIO, it is not always the best choice for a lot of community organisations. Similar to the structure of a traditional trust, a single-tier SCIO leaves complete control of the organisation in the hands of a small group of individuals, including control over future changes to the constitution, and over who serves on the SCIO board. So whilst a single-tier SCIO has the benefit of simplicity and reduced administration, it lacks wider accountability.” (SCVO, 2017).

Relationships between partners are usually set out in a partnership agreement, although these were not located in the desk review for many of the partnerships (especially the smaller / more informal partnerships). Where available, most are voluntary agreements with varying levels of detail, ranging from relatively brief informal agreements to more detailed articles of association. More generally, best practice suggests that agreements should be based on identifiable responsibilities, joint rights and obligations, and be signed by all relevant partners (OECD, 2006). The main components of a partnership agreement include:

- Shared objectives
- Communication and information sharing procedures
- Financing and accounting procedures
- Staff resourcing
- Change in partners’ involvement and procedures for admitting a new partner
- Decision making and conflict resolution processes
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures, both for the partnership and for its activities

Solway Firth Partnership

- Scottish Charity Ltd by guarantee
- Board can delegate powers to Advisory Committee
- Advisory Committee. Each corporate member can elect one advisory member. Advisory Committee can elect up to 5 other members.
- Decisions made by consensus or majority vote.



Tweed Forum

- Scottish Charity Ltd by guarantee
- Board has responsibility and liability for the running of the partnership
- Regular progress review by Board (quarterly) and Steering Group + Forum members (6 monthly)



GSA Biosphere

- SCIO governed in accordance with 2017 constitution
- The Partnership Board reserves the power to direct the Trust to take whatever action the Board considers appropriate. Requires a 40% quorum for decision making.
- Board membership is by written application



Regional Economic Partnership

- Remit set out in TORs
- Members from number of backgrounds. Councils/SOSE Board appoint their members. National Agencies and Education Institutions appoint their representatives. Private Sector, Social Enterprise, Community, 3rd Sector, and Registered Social Landlord representatives appointed through competitive application process (for a two-year period). Young People Representatives facilitated through dedicated Modern Apprenticeship roles.



Figure 1: Outline governance structures for four large-scale partnerships in the South of Scotland region.⁴

The details of decision making processes within existing partnership Boards are often unclear. In most of the partnerships reviewed, decision making is by consensus, but it is not often clear how conflicts are resolved. Experience from research on catchment partnerships suggests that conflict is often avoided within decision making processes, which can lead to partnerships taking the path of least resistance and 'group think' (Waylen et al. 2021).

⁴ Note that the Biosphere is in the process of restructuring.

3.2.2 Activities and instruments

Activities and instruments that influence land use range from voluntary instruments such as education, knowledge exchange and promotion of voluntary guidelines, to statutory approaches such as regulation, levies and creation of market incentives (Brown and Everard 2015). Most of the partnerships reviewed in the desk study were limited to voluntary instruments, although many involve partners with a statutory remit.

Where partnerships are involved in implementation 'on the ground', few base their activities on spatial land use planning, for example, through the development of strategic plans across different landowners. Instead, they often implement a set of projects prioritised in the business plan. Galloway Glens, for example, has 35 headline projects that were initially developed through consultation with stakeholders in their bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It has been developed as a "delivery vehicle" and is not focussed on more strategic issues such as future land use. The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, in contrast has developed a high level spatial plan through its designated zones, but they have not yet engaged significantly in more detailed spatial planning across the region. Where discussions about the strategic vision for the landscape have moved on to those about more detailed spatial planning, differences between stakeholders have become more apparent and it has sometimes been hard to keep people round the table.

Land ownership is an important factor in the types of activities partnerships engage in and their ability to influence change on the ground. Borders Forest Trust, for example, is making relatively large scale investments in landscape restoration but this is primarily happening on its own land holdings. By contrast Tweed Forum and SAOS work with groups of landowners in different ways. The Tweed Forum often brings land owners together around particular projects, or approaches/is approached by land owners about potential opportunities (e.g. around river restoration). SAOS is a private company providing advice and support to farmer cooperatives who do their own land management planning and has developed various tools (e.g. CarbonPositive) that can help to improve efficiency and environmental impact. They are also involved with NatureScot in POBAS (Piloting an Outcome Based Approach in Scotland) methodology. This work has involved working with the Milk Supply Association (MSA) co-op of dairy farmers in SouthWest Scotland, including visits to pilot farms to determine the opportunities for biodiversity improvement, understanding the learnings of a POBAS type of project in the dairy sector in Ireland, the development of scorecards to enable biodiversity scoring, and trialling the use of these on farm.

Few partnerships are implementing natural capital or ecosystem based approaches to land use planning, as is the aim of an increasing number of landscape scale partnerships across the UK (e.g. South West Partnership for Environmental and Economic Prosperity (SWEEP); Norfolk and Suffolk Councils; Water Resources East etc.). However, some partnerships have significant experience in this area. For example, Tweed Forum gained experience of implementing an ecosystem based approach during the first LUS pilot, has a number of ongoing projects that aim to evaluate natural capital at the landscape scale (e.g. the Eddleston Water NFM project), and has internal GIS expertise. The Biosphere has conducted GIS-based ecosystem service mapping to help inform its activities in the past, but has had limited internal expertise to take this forward. This may change with its involvement in projects such as LENS and a pilot proposal under the Borderlands Growth Deal. The Borderlands Growth Deal has a £10 million programme on natural capital, for which the strategic approach is being supported by economic modelling and implementation, mainly through a series of pilot projects. Other references to work on natural capital during the interviews included: Solway Firth Partnership's work on evaluating natural capital in marine and coastal areas (currently at desk review stage); Southern Upland Partnership experience

of ecosystem-based approaches in the first LUS pilot (though noting limited capacity to implement such approaches in-house); and the Borders Forest Trust's involvement in carbon markets (though again noting that they rely on intermediaries for assessing and valuing carbon assets).

3.2.3 Finance and resourcing

It is difficult to determine levels of resourcing in existing partnerships, as this information is often not readily available in documentation, particularly for the smaller partnerships. From those interviewed who provided this information, financing varied from £50,000 to £5 million (with exception of Borderland Growth Deal, which has a cross-border budget of £450 million). None have long term core financing (>5 years) and only two of the partnerships have core finance >£2 million. A number cited uncertainties over funding, a lack of core funding (as opposed to funding allocated to projects), the ad-hoc nature of funding and the short timescale of funding as key barriers to delivering a strategic work programme.

The cost of running these partnerships vary with scale and the nature of their activities. As an indicative figure from a partnership with similar scale and a strategic remit, the REP Secretariat costs are £100,000 per year (two full time staff) excluding the significant calls on time of a wider pool of officers in SOSE and across the partners, which is difficult to quantify. Costs for strategy development came from existing budgets.

Most partnerships are funded from public budgets (Scottish Government, UK Government and the EU) and foundations. The National Lottery Heritage Fund, for example, provides significant funding to the Galloway Glens initiative. Individuals and crowd-sourced funding are important sources for the Borders Forest Trust and Langholm.

A few initiatives are receiving or interacting more with private finance. These include LENS with funding from Nestle; Tweed Forum, mainly acting as an intermediary for private finance, e.g. through carbon markets; and the Solway Firth Partnership, which gets a small amount of funding from RWE for communications activities. The Borders Forest Trust receives some income for peatland restoration and tree planting from carbon finance (via Forest Carbon Ltd). Forest Carbon Ltd. pay 90% of the money for carbon credits upfront, with the balance of payment after 5 years of implementation. The Trust also receives money from companies with a corporate social responsibility interest in supporting conservation (e.g. Innocent Smoothies, TSB bank) through intermediaries such as 'One Tree Planted'.

3.2.4 Review

Monitoring and evaluation systems are particularly important in partnerships linked to land use and management because of the complexities of programme implementation across diverse landscapes and stakeholders. Unfortunately review systems are often under-resourced and partnerships may not use review processes despite the benefits (Watson, 2019; Waylen et al., 2021). This can be because of the complexities involved in developing indicators, long time lags in changes to these indicators, the costs and skills involved in collecting and analysing data, or political factors such as where stakeholders resist being monitored.

Approaches to monitoring and evaluation are generally poorly documented across the initiatives reviewed, though the larger partnerships are developing or have developed monitoring frameworks. For example, the RES is developing a measurement framework that will draw the "baseline position and identify the key indicators by which progress will be tracked across the short, medium and long term, as well as targets where appropriate" (REP Delivery Plan 2021). It will also look to align with the National Performance Framework.

Similarly, the BGD states that “The Deal monitoring and evaluation framework will incorporate indicators from the Scottish Government’s inclusive growth outcomes framework published on the SCRIG website. Work has been commissioned to produce inclusive growth indicators for the English part of the region, to match what is already being produced in Scotland. This will provide an overall regional view as a baseline for measuring our inclusive growth outcomes of increased jobs, increased economic participation and better paid jobs. We have also commissioned work to show the regional level view to produce the economic baseline and sustainable growth baseline.” The Galloway Glens partnership also has a well-developed monitoring framework developed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, with baseline data established on a project-by-project basis and combined into a framework to monitor the whole initiative. Financial impact is also being tracked, for example showing that 190 businesses have worked on initiatives linked to the partnership.

Most of the medium-sized partnerships have more informal monitoring processes that involve the Board monitoring progress against objectives set out in the business plan or action plan (although specific projects may have more detailed monitoring plans). They vary in whether they set out measurable key performance indicators or a baseline. Where indicators are developed they are often proxy indicators measuring outputs rather than outcomes (e.g. numbers of stakeholders engaged). However, partnerships involved in implementation (e.g. BFT and Tweed Forum) often report impacts based on indicators such as number of hectares of trees planted.

3.3 Perspectives from existing initiatives on the proposed RLUP

3.3.1 Views on RLUP aims and objectives

Interviewees were asked to give their responses to the following statement:

“The South of Scotland Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) pilot aims to deliver a collaborative approach to land use change decision-making. A Partnership Board will be established with representatives from South of Scotland communities, land use sectors and public bodies, setting the vision and direction of the Partnership and prioritising key objectives for land use. The RLUP will then develop a Regional Land Use Framework, based on a natural capital approach, that will prioritise land use change delivering national climate change and biodiversity objectives. By guiding action at a regional, strategic level, the Partnership aims to support local initiatives and partnerships and enhance existing knowledge and experience.”

A number of interviewees⁵ said that this is the right sentiment for RLUPs (“wonderful idea”, “absolutely right”, “really supportive, we need an RLUP and an RLUF”), with interviewees picking out the emphasis on collaboration and focus on the development of a strategic plan as being particularly important. However, many of the same interviewees expressed a concern about the lack of powers and that the statement needed to reflect this, for example through more specific language on how the RLUP might influence incentives and how they will be financed, or changes to existing legislation around the balance of conifer and broadleaf tree species in plantations. One interviewee went so far as to say “RLUPs live or die based on their statutory backing and cannot be progressed without saying out loud that they will devolve decision making”.

A number of interviewees commented on the sectoral scope of the statement. For example, a number of the initiatives focussed on economic development suggested that the economic

⁵ In the sections that follow “Most” refers to >6 interviewees and “A number of” refers to 2-6 interviewees.

dimension is missing in the framing of the RLUP as it currently stands. Economic and infrastructure issues (specifically housing, transport and productivity (e.g. around communications infrastructure and cabling)) are the key issues that communities have raised in the ongoing RES roadshow, so the RLUP has to ensure that it demonstrates where the links are. However, one initiative cautioned that it may be impossible to influence land use through such a broad church, and ultimately Scottish Government will have to make top down decisions that are not popular. One of the more environmentally focussed initiatives also emphasised that it is important to remember that RLUPs are linked to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act in order to take better control of greenhouse gas outputs from our land, so this needs to come through the RLUP work plan. One also made a comment on where the boundary is drawn with marine and coastal areas, suggesting that the links are important, but the links to Crown Estate ownership may complicate things, so only raised as a question whether the scope should extend into the marine realm.

A number of interviewees made comments about the practicalities involved in running the RLUP. One highlighted the need to avoid duplication with existing Boards and structures in the region, so these need to be carefully considered prior to implementation. Two also expressed concern that while the sentiment is good, there is nothing specific in this approach that will help to break down the deep polarisation that exists around land use.

There were a number of comments about the language used, asking for more clarity on what is meant by a “framework”, that language around “natural capital” is exclusive, that the mention “of local community representation needs to be more prominent” and specific, and that for those outside the sector there may even be confusion on what is meant by “land use”. One also questioned the reference to “national” objectives, saying that at the minute, these often do not reflect local circumstances (e.g. around forestry development in Dumfries and Galloway) so the RLUP needs to recognise that these may not align.

3.3.2 How can the RLUP add value to partnerships already operating?

All of the interviewees felt that the RLUP could add value in the region if it is established in an appropriate way, although this was caveated in all cases by comments about the challenges involved. Many cited the main role of the RLUP as setting out the “long term”, “proactive” vision for the region’s landscape and bringing all discussions happening on land together in one place as they are currently fragmented and reactive at present. In order to do this successfully it would need to retain a strategic, high level remit as it is too large an area to cover at “ground level”. One interviewee suggested that in order to operationalise this, it could set out guiding principles for land use in different areas that can be incorporated into statutory processes (e.g. planning). This might also help to address challenges of working across such a diverse region.

Most of the interviewees also highlighted the role that the RLUP could play in addressing coordination challenges through setting regional priorities and aligning existing processes. They highlighted issues such as current challenges to investment due to a lack of joined up decision making, aligning different policy instruments (e.g. agricultural subsidies and forest grants), and a lack of engagement from central government housing and transport policy areas in land use decision making. Two of the interviewees referred more specifically to the RLUP’s potential to improve economic efficiency through increased coordination around land use planning. The RLUP/RLUF could help to target investments within a “land use masterplan”, identify the best investment models (e.g. in working with groups of farmers) and become a “one stop shop for investors in the region” who currently find it hard to navigate regulations in the east and west. It could also provide local pilot examples that can inform higher level policy development.

Two of the interviewees cited the potential for the RLUP to provide an added and more focussed voice for the region in communications with Scottish Government around land use issues. One suggested that in doing so, it could help to engage with other parts of government that do not currently think they have links to land use.

Most of the interviewees suggested that the added value is particularly in how the RLUP facilitates dialogue about land use. They said it could provide a forum where “listening actually happens” and “facilitates compromise” compared to the status quo (e.g. in consultation processes around windfarms), which is either to avoid conflict and/or carry out inadequate levels of consultation or “one-way” consultation that tells communities what an investor intends to do under the guise of consulting. A number also highlighted that it could lead a more holistic and balanced approach that delivers multiple benefits. However, when pushed for concrete examples they were unsure how these more balanced approaches could be achieved in practice.

3.4 Perspectives from existing initiatives on collaboration with the RLUP

3.4.1 How existing partnerships would envisage collaborating with the RLUP

There were two broad groups of responses in terms of views on collaboration with the future RLUP: 1) Existing land use and environmentally focussed partnerships, and strategic regional initiatives, said that they would be interested in engaging at a high level, potentially with (chief executive or equivalent) representation on the Board as well as helping to implement activities with stakeholders. 2) Non land-use focussed initiatives envisaging engaging in a consultative or advisory capacity.

The existing land use and environmental partnerships gave examples of engaging in implementation that included both strategy development and work with stakeholders “on the ground”. Strategic engagement examples included helping to advise the Board and developing the strategic framework. Examples of working with stakeholders on the ground included helping to communicate with RLUP stakeholders through their existing networks (e.g. member meetings, newsletters); running local level pilots (e.g. collaboration between farmer cooperatives and environmental bodies to integrate a natural capital approach); and working with land managers on land use planning activities. Many initiatives are already carrying out complementary activities which could help in the implementation of the RLUF (e.g. LENS, Growth Deal pilots, Destination Tweed).

A number of the interviewees stressed that the level of engagement would be highly dependent on resourcing given that their funding is relatively ad-hoc and already allocated (“often initiatives like this want to draw on expertise free of charge, which is challenging given the number of initiatives, devalues the contribution and can lead to bias in who participates” (i.e. those with time)). They would also need to be convinced that the process was outcome-focussed with a clear vision for how it could achieve change. They suggested that it will need to influence local budgets such as enabling targeting of funds (e.g. as a woodland strategy guides forestry grants). In addition to the financial resourcing concerns raised, some highlighted the time commitment required and balancing this with many other voluntary activities (e.g. Board and Steering Group participation) that they are already involved with, meaning the case for involvement would need to be clearly set out.

The second group gave examples of engagement that included being an exemplar of particular land management approaches to inform RLUP activities, providing technical advice (e.g. on farm business models; integration of carbon accounting into land use e.g. through CarbonPositive and SmartRural), and being a consultee responding on questions

related to their specific sectoral area. One interviewee suggested that it would be useful for the RLUP to support pilot initiatives run by existing partnerships in order to provide successful case studies. These could work in different areas (e.g. in an upland area, mixed farmland, dairy, arable farming) with a mix of private and public sector owners, starting with those easiest to implement and working with existing groups where farmers are already organised such as Machinery Rings.

Participants were asked to suggest successful existing collaborative initiatives from the region that might help to inform collaborative working at similar scales. They generally struggled to identify regional scale examples, although SOSE, the RES and the Borderlands Growth Deal were raised by three interviewees. Other examples included: the earlier LUS pilot, the Tweed Catchment Management Plan, Galloway Glens, Peatland Action, Langholm, ArlAgarden Initiative, First Milk regenerative farming, LEADER (though one interviewee noted the difficulty this has faced in spanning the whole region), Town Centre Action Plans, and Ireland's EU funded Red Kite project. Some uncertainty was expressed about the Borderlands Growth Deal given its early stage and its overly-heavy governance structures. Scepticism was also expressed around the Scottish Land Use and Forestry Strategies, as examples of strategies that have not changed land use and management in practice, and around the Scottish Rural Development Programme due to the perverse incentives it has created in some cases (e.g. around Black Grouse conservation).

3.4.2 Governance structures for collaboration with existing initiatives

Most interviewees suggested that high level governance structures already exist in the region that the RLUP could build on and some noted that it is important not to create new structures. A number specifically highlighted the leadership role that SOSE could play and the potential for the RLUP to be linked into the REP (e.g. as a delivery arm on land-use related aspects of the RES) and the Borderlands Initiative (there is an intention to establish a strong linkage with the Natural Capital Pilot Programme Board). However, they suggested some significant concerns about the ability of these structures to deliver, including:

- SOSE's apparent limited resources for revenue expenditure
- Limited statutory powers of SOSE and the Councils relative to the Scottish Government, particularly on agricultural policy
- The tendency of SOSE to set up new initiatives rather than working through existing initiatives
- Maintaining the environmental and social remit of the RLUP, particularly if it is linked to the REP Board
- Ability to take a long term perspective beyond the usual five year cycle

A number of interviewees also reiterated that the RLUPs must have some statutory powers and/or "hold the purse strings" in order to secure long-term engagement from existing partnerships and other stakeholders. One also emphasised that setting up an initial structure to establish the scope and purpose of the RLUP has to lead any discussion of the governance structure.

A number of interviewees suggested that the best way for the RLUP to collaborate with existing initiatives is to focus on its role in establishing a clear and flexible strategic framework but deliver through existing initiatives ("lean, mean, efficient and uses the expertise that the region already has"). Cooperation is working well within many existing initiatives (e.g. Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere; Tweed Forum), so if the RLUP can provide some strategic direction for these initiatives, there is a higher chance of success. One suggested that it may be possible to incorporate an RLUP session within existing members meetings (as has been done in the past for River Basin Management Plan

Area Advisory Groups) as experience shows that many of the same people are involved in the same meeting. By linking processes at a more strategic level (e.g. recognition of Biosphere zones within planning policy), the RLUP could help facilitate implementation by existing initiatives and policies.

Most of the interviewees raised concerns about how the RLUP can achieve representation across such a wide region (“needs to be narrowed down and made more specific”). A number suggested that in practice this may require some form of down-scaling with sub-regional (east/west) advisory groups supporting a regional Board, the creation of RLUP “hubs”, or a downscaling of the overall programme to focus on a subset of more manageable areas where there is already strong partnership working (e.g. the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere) or the selection of some priority issues (e.g. future of upland sheep farming). One suggested that it would be useful to look at how different third sector organisations across Scotland operate with communities and to draw on both their positive and negative experiences (e.g. Development Trusts Association Scotland, Community Land Scotland, and Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations). They suggested that often these anchor organisations and their partners have more agency than Community Councils.

A number gave suggestions from their experience about the RLUP governance structure. One suggested that the governance system has to be established initially at a macro-level and then any sub-structures developed later. This will avoid conflicts that will inevitably emerge as soon as stakeholders start to discuss specific land use designations (three interviewees cited experience in the backlash from participants at meetings once discussion moves towards specific landscapes and land use parcels). Another recommended that there would be a need to have sufficient meetings, consider the capacity of individuals and organisations to participate, and the need for in-person as well as online meetings. Lead and key officers should participate as a firm commitment and avoid sending proxies (one cited experience in the LEADER programme suggesting that “some people just showed up briefly and didn't contribute any value” to programme meetings). The Board should be small, meet at a minimum of a quarterly basis, and include as a priority key players at the heart of the process (e.g. landowners and land managers and organisations with power over the key levers such as statutory agencies). However, it must have sufficient community representation and not include just the “usual suspects”. They also suggested that the RLUP will need central core-funding resources for coordination and to generate “oxygen” to keep people engaged.

Interviewees also raised a number of other relevant points, including:

- The need for a system for cross-boundary coordination (particularly taking into account links with South and East Ayrshire)
- The need for education and training for planners on rural natural capital in order to help integrate and build on planning infrastructure
- Need to clarify where the RLUP links with NPF4 and wider agricultural policy

4 Discussion and conclusions

There is a rich variety of partnerships and initiatives operating across the South of Scotland at a range of scales. A limited number of these are focussed on land use and working at a landscape scale, but some have been operating for a long time with significant influence and networks, both strategically and with stakeholders on the ground. The links between RLUPs and partnerships working in areas outside the land sector (e.g. tourism) are difficult to define and this is reflected in the responses from interviewees who envisaged a more advisory or

consultative role in the RLUP. The definition of the scope of initiatives to influence land use decisions and the incorporation of natural capital into decision making is of course, not unique to the South of Scotland and a key aim of many current policy initiatives. Newer partnerships such as the RES and BGD operating at the regional scale provide an opportunity to better define these links and broaden the scope of the RLUP.

There is broad support for the RLUP among existing partnerships and a keenness to engage both at a strategic level and through the potential implementation of activities with stakeholders in their existing networks. Existing partnerships see clear added value in the overall objective of the RLUP, although with many concerns about how to ensure its effectiveness. They are clear that without addressing these concerns early in the development of the RLUP they are unlikely to engage in the long term and that the RLUP could be ineffective in efforts to develop more integrated land use in the region.

While specific governance options did not emerge from the interviews, interviewees helped define some key principles for how they might engage with the RLUP that should be borne in mind in discussions about the governance structure:

- Clear communication about the added value of the RLUP, and what it does that existing initiatives do not already do.
- A clear definition of how the RLUP bridges scales in the region, potentially reflected in a governance structure that addresses differences between east and west.
- Focus on the RLUP providing strategic direction for existing initiatives, which will provide added value given lack of a strategic vision for land use in the region.
- Need for RLUP to support and work through existing initiatives at all levels given that they have extensive networks, often link directly to landowners, and it takes time to build relationships. This will also reduce the “clutter” that could result from establishing new initiatives.

The interviewees also helped to outline how existing partnerships could link to the RLUP at three main levels, including: 1) High level involvement of one or more representatives from existing land use partnerships on the Board; 2) Other key initiatives participating in an advisory group, potentially with some influence over decision making (e.g. through voting rights); and 3) groups working on wider issues involved through a broader consultative structure (e.g. as members). Those representing sectors currently seen as more tangential to land use decisions will need to be more proactively engaged and the case made clearly to them as to how their participation will benefit their agenda.

How might these insights inform the RLUP governance structure in practice? Drawing on insights from analysis of existing partnership structures, two main options could be considered. These are summarised below and in Figure 2:

Option 1: A single Board of around 16 representatives supported by a small Secretariat, meeting four times per year and potentially supported by ad-hoc Working Groups that play a purely advisory role. The composition of such a Board could include the following representatives: 1 SOSE, 1 REP, 2 Local Authorities, 2 Statutory Bodies, 3 Agricultural/Land Management groups, 2 Environmental NGOs, 2 Local Community Representatives, 2 Existing land use partnerships in the region and 1 Education. This should aim to include representatives from eastern and western areas in each category where possible in order to respond to comments about reflecting the differences across the region made by interviewees.

The advantage of this structure are that it is ‘light touch’ and therefore relatively easy to set up and manage. The disadvantages are that it is a relatively small structure compared to the

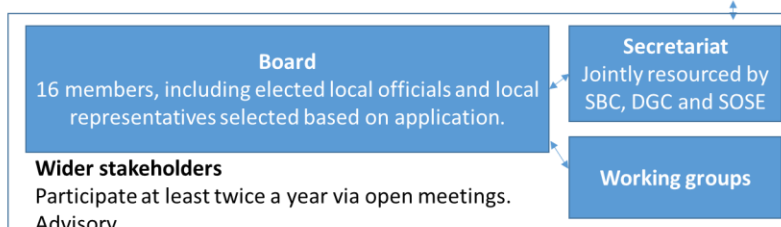
scale and breadth of the issues. It is difficult to achieve good cross-sectoral and cross-scalar representation without expanding the Board. It also risks having lower accountability compared to the second option outlined below, given its smaller scope and that there is less explicit accountability between the Board and the 'membership' of the partnership. These issues could be partially offset by developing clear terms of reference on how the Board engages with wider stakeholders and how this influences decision making.

Option 2: A two-tier structure resembling many existing partnerships operating in the third sector. This would have a smaller Board (6-10 representatives) overseeing strategic delivery of the RLUF (and potentially its implementation), but appointed from within a wider partnership advisory group (~20 representatives) that holds delegated powers. The Board and Advisory Group would have both appointed and elected members. To further increase accountability the partnership could have a wider membership that votes in elected members of the decision making bodies at an Annual General Meeting. As in option 1, the Board/Advisory Group could be supported by ad-hoc Working Groups that play a purely advisory role on specific issues.

The advantage of this structure is that it increases accountability, whilst helping to keep the Board small. The increased size of the decision making body would help achieve balanced representation across the broad geographic and sectoral scope of the partnership. It would also help to increase representation from existing partnerships in the region, potentially including the six main existing land use partnerships operating in the region that have been interviewed here (Borders Forest Trust; Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere; Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership; Solway Firth partnership; Southern Uplands Partnership; and Tweed Forum). It would require more resourcing (e.g. around rules for membership, should members have voting rights) but this could be kept minimal with clear operating procedures. The structure may be overly-elaborate for the development of a strategic plan such as a RLUF as it is suited to project delivery and implementation that is the focus of Phase Three.

Option 1

- Single Board of ~16 members
- Twice yearly stakeholder meetings, with purely advisory role
- Support from advisory ad-hoc Working Groups chosen by Board on specific themes linked to developing RLUF



Option 2

- Two-tier structure: smaller Board and larger Advisory Group drawn from membership.
- Advisory Group has delegated powers.
- Decision making bodies include appointed and elected members, potentially elected by wider membership
- Support from advisory ad-hoc Working Groups chosen by Board on specific themes linked to developing RLUF

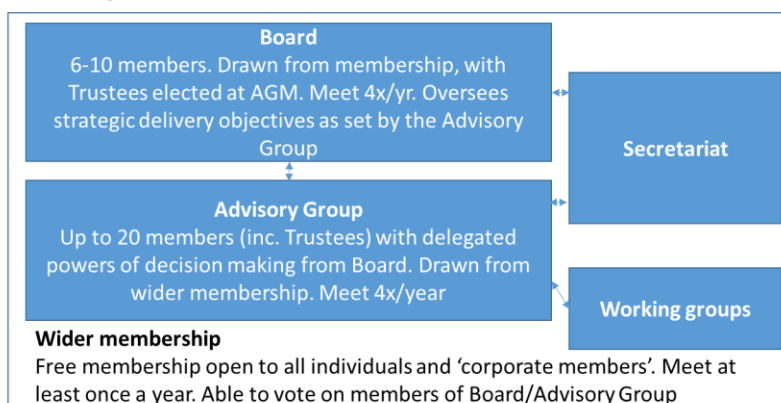


Figure 2: Two potential governance structures for the SoS RLUF based on insights from existing structures. Option 1 is simpler, whilst option 2 is more elaborate but with potentially greater representation.

Another key issue that emerged from this research is defining where the RLUP sits in relation to other regional structures. Most of the interviewees emphasised that the RLUP

needs to build on the many positive things already happening in the region and to add value, rather than add to the ‘clutter’ of existing structures. It is particularly important for the RLUP to be closely aligned with the REP/RES given that this operates at the same scale; that the RES already includes a Green Economy theme and a number of actions related to green growth/ natural capital; and that the REP/RES are already aligned with other structures at similar scales, such as the Borderlands Growth Deal. The REP member interviewed suggested that the RLUP could become an official sub-group of the RES and a long-term delivery partner (potentially with delegated authority). It is not apparent from documentation on the RES that official sub-groups exist, but the formalisation of such a relationship with the RLUP should be explored. The RLUP’s remit should cover both specific deliverables on land use (e.g. sustainable agriculture, restoring peatlands) but as crucially help to develop a more integrated framework that incorporates land use considerations into other aspects of the RES (e.g. digital infrastructure). Concerns about the current composition of the RES (outlined in section 3.4.2) will need to be taken into account if the alignment of the two initiatives is made explicit.

Unlike the REP/RES, the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) did not come up in any of the interviews. This may be a feature of who was interviewed, but in any case it is another structure at the regional scale which should be linked to the RLUP. Currently, it is unclear how NPF4 (including the RSS) links to the Land Use Strategy or the final role that the RSS will play in influencing rural land use (Brand, 2022). The evolution of NPF4 needs to be tracked by the RLUP (and planning representation included on any Board/Advisory Group) but it is not possible at this stage to say how the processes should be linked.

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6 Acknowledgements

Leo Peskett is supported by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Strategic Priorities Fund Landscape Decisions Programme (<https://landscapedecisions.org/>). Many thanks to Andy Tharme (SOSE) for input to the report and interviews.

7 Appendices

7.1 Long list of partnerships

A-Regional

Tweed Forum
South of Scotland Enterprise
Southern Uplands Partnership
Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal
Regional Spatial Strategy
Visit Scotland
South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership
South of Scotland Destination Alliance
Scottish Forestry Regional Strategic Woodland Creation Project

B-Sub-regional

Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere
Solway Firth Partnership
Galloway Fisheries Trust
Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership
SEStran
River Tweed Commission/Tweed Foundation
NFUS branches
Landscape Enterprise Networks
Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network
DGC Access Trust
Solway Tweed River Basin Management Plan advisory group
Solway River Basin Management Plan advisory group
Tweed River Basin Management Plan advisory group
Scottish Borders Access Forum
Galloway & Dumfriesshire Deer Group
Live Borders
South Scotland Forestry Forum
Borders Area Partnership
Edinburgh and SES city deal
D&G Citizens Assembly

C-Local

Langholm Initiative
Buccleuch Estates
Borders Forest Trust
Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership
SLE-branches and regional hubs (SW and SE)
Newcastleton and District Community Trust
Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Trust
Berwickshire Marine Reserve
Cheviot Area Partnership
Eildon Area Partnership
Berwickshire Agricultural Group
Gatehouse Development Initiative



Regenerative Farmers Network South West Scotland
Tweed Green
Teviot and Liddesdale area partnership
Greener Melrose
Berwickshire Area Partnership
Greener Hawick