

Summary of key findings from the South of Scotland Regional Land Use Partnership Pilot (RLUP) consultation events October/November 2022

The South of Scotland Regional Land Use Partnership Pilot aims to test a collaborative, inclusive approach to land use decision making, involving a representative range of stakeholders and using a natural capital approach that views land as an asset that delivers multiple benefits. The recent consultation events form part of a wider programme of work to develop a pilot Regional Land Use Framework for South of Scotland.

The aim of the events was to explore as part of a 5-step natural capital approach, the benefits provided by the land and key land use challenges and opportunities perceived by people across South Scotland. We also wanted to discover whether these perceptions varied from place to place or between various “land-users”.

18 live events took place at venues across the South of Scotland as well as 2 online events (one considering the Scottish Borders and the other considering Dumfries & Galloway). The full report is available on the internet here (<https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/RLUP>).

Participants were invited to select the category of “landuser” they considered themselves to be and we had representation of all 18 categories – with “built heritage” and “mining/minerals” being the only ones with less than 3 representatives. The others had a minimum of 7 representatives across the events.

By far the most common **benefits** from the land expressed by participants were:

- Tourism
- Nature/biodiversity
- Food/drink
- Recreation
- Well-being

When asked to consider the range of **challenges** that land use faced, the top five choices were:

- Biodiversity decline
- Forestry expansion
- Agricultural viability
- Climate change
- Demographic change and lack of jobs

There were some differences between the priorities chosen in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway with Forestry, demographic change and flood management featuring more highly in Dumfries & Galloway. We suspect that some local differences will appear when the final analysis is completed.

We asked people to comment on issues/differences of opinion that arose in the selection process of key challenges and interestingly the following topics generated the most comments:

- Forestry expansion
- Demographic change
- Lack of community involvement in land management
- Top-down policy approach
- Renewable energy development

We then asked participants to consider the **opportunities** that land use change offered in each locality. The top opportunities were more evenly spread but the top 10 overall were:

- Local food production
- Sustainable tourism
- Community involvement in policy making and decision-making process
- Rural employment in agriculture
- Native woodland restoration
- Regenerative agriculture
- Restoration of ecological processes
- Farm diversification
- Soil regeneration
- Renewable energy

Again, people were encouraged to comment on topics of contention or particular interest and the top topics that participants most commented on were:

- Local food production
- Renewable energy
- Woodland expansion for climate change
- Rural employment in agriculture
- Native woodland expansion

Finally, we encouraged participants to note any other issues they wanted the RLUP (or Scottish Government) to consider as part of this process.

These were categorised and the top issues were:

- Decision-making process
- Governance structures
- Balance of land use
- Use of subsidies / investment
- Rural population and housing
- Stakeholder related issues
- Local enterprise and broadband

It is clear from this that there is significant interest in the way the RLUP should be governed and be representative and the way policy and incentives are managed.

Next steps

There is further analysis to be done on the data we have captured, particularly around Place, which will be considered in a Final Stakeholder Engagement Report. The next stage of the project, taking a natural capital approach, will explore how some of the challenges and opportunities might be addressed, where trade-offs will be required and consider priorities for land use change.

We will promote these workshops early in the New Year with events taking place from the end of January to end of February 2023. We hope that participants who have contributed to the pilot so far might be willing to stay involved. Further details can be found on SOSE's website

<https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/RLUP>

and the RLUP Consultation hub (to book events) : <https://south-scotland-regional-land-use-partnership-pilot-luc.hub.arcgis.com/>

We would like to thank everyone who has engaged in the rich discussions so far and look forward to seeing you again in 2023.



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