

# Sustainable Land Management Working Group

## Meeting Outputs



July 15, 2021: 10:00 to 12:00

MS Teams meeting

**Chair:** Mary Christie (NatureScot)

**Coordinator:** Rory McLeod (Scottish Forum on Natural Capital)

### Attending:

Mary Christie (NatureScot); Rory McLeod (SFoNC); Kirsty Blackstock (JHI); Cath Preston (SEPA); Stephen Young (Scottish Land & Estates); Paul Richardson (Scottish Land & Estates); Pat Snowdon (Scottish Forestry), Ross Johnston (Scottish Government); Kirsty Hutchison (NatureScot); Alice Hunter (Scottish Government); Harriet Donald (LLTNPA); Stuart Shaw (NatureScot); Mark Williams (Scottish Water); Bruce Wilson (Scottish Wildlife Trust)

### Apologies:

Louise Bond (SEPA); Ross Lilley (Nature Scot); Anne Grey (Heather Trust); Marina Curran-Colthart (Argyll and Bute Council); Roger Burton (Heather Trust/Moorland Forum); Emma Patterson Taylor (SAOS); Kate Bellew (Crown Estate Scotland); Sarah Cowie (NFUS); Alistair McVittie (SRUC); Morag Garden (Scotch Whisky Association); Jared Stewart (Scottish Water); Marc Metzger (University of Edinburgh); Michael Cairns (Scottish Government)

### Purpose:

- To update on policy, projects, and research links pertinent to group members
- To discuss how the Group can support the RLUP pilots
- To confirm group goals for 2021

## 1. Welcome & introductions – (Mary Christie)

## 2. Land use and natural capital policy update from Scottish Government – (Ross Johnston)

Scotgov focus post-election - working on delivering manifesto and First 100 days commitments

Key within this:

### 1. National Strategy for Economic Transformation

List recently announced of National Economic Council, which will advise government and process.

### 2. Climate change catch-up plan

Meeting legal commitments for climate change is challenging, with a “catch-up plan” intended to make up gap in performance. Actions will have a strong focus on land use.

This will be relevant for the group either in seeking our views to feed in or responding to outcomes.

No dates set yet for when we or other stakeholders might be expected to feed in.

### 3. Internal workings of Scotgov

Land Use Transformation board now established, with a collaborative framework embedded across two main Directorates in government (Agriculture and Rural Economy; and Environment and Forestry) and also the agencies they sponsor eg RESAS/SEPA/NatureScot.

Current workstreams include:

- i) Focus on data – how to improve use of land use data to underpin policy? Currently fragmented and lacks coherence.
- ii) Explore how to better enable private investment into land use, primarily to offset carbon but also to benefit wildlife.

What is role of public sector in this context? Important to make Agri-payments bill and Land Use bills coherent with enabling private sector investment.

Recognition within Scotgov that the way some public schemes run currently can be viewed as a disincentive to simultaneously seek private sector investment.

4. Scotgov response to the Just Transition Commission report underway

Scotgov is very mindful of report recommendations, and not to exacerbate inequality amid the drive to tackle climate change.

**Action - (All) Familiarise ourselves with Just Transition Commission recommendations given likely importance Scotgov will attach, and not to exacerbate inequality amid the drive to tackle climate change.**

### 3. Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) pilots - how can the Group contribute?

#### i. Background and SG aims for RLUP pilots, including applying a natural capital approach: (Alice Hunter - Head of Regional Land Use Partnerships Policy)

Definition - RLUPs are partnerships that enable collaborative and natural capital-led decision making on regional land use changes, involving local and national government, communities, land owners, land managers, and wider stakeholders. These land use changes will help address the climate and environment crises.

RLUPs aims are in 3 phases:

Phase 1: Establish a partnership structure to deliver a collaborative approach to land use change decision-making, involving national and local government, land owners and managers, communities and stakeholders. (by end March 2022).

RLUPs continue to progress with 5 pilots underway: Cairngorms National Park, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders, Aberdeenshire and City, and Highland (possibly entire Highland, or subset)

Phase 2: Each pilot has signed up to initiate a RLUP, and have Regional Land-use Frameworks in place that will outline how to use a natural capital approach to identify and agree upon current and potential land use changes across the regions, that support the delivery of ScotGov's climate change targets and other environmental objectives, including improving biodiversity (by end 2023)

Phase 3: Signpost public and private funding opportunities for land owners and managers, or community groups to assist with land use changes based on RLUF. (Post-2023)

Key discussion points around RLUPs:

1. What does a “Natural capital approach” mean in both a policy sense, and when land managers are taking decisions on the ground?

Determining exactly how land use data (supported by Scotgov mapping tool and data catalogue) and “natural capital approaches” can play a role in RLUPs will be an important area for the SLMG to feed into, in collaboration with the Natural Capital Policy unit in Scotgov, (led by R Johnson & P Phillips) and other stakeholders.

2. What is the balance between “top down” and “bottom-up” approaches within RLUPs? Scotgov steer important, as is genuine participation from local communities/ stakeholders so new framework is not “imposed”

Important to retain learnings from previous land use pilots (in Borders) and also for new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to feed in (2 years away currently)

**Action - (All) Group are invited to reflect on Alice’s presentation (attached) and feed in individually or through the SLMG as RLUPs develop.**

**Action - (All) Group are invited to consider what a “natural capital approach” means in decision-making processes and liaise with Alice Hunter and the wider group**

**Action - (AH & BW) Scotgov to meet with Scottish Wildlife Trust to further discussion around RLUPs**

**Action - (AH & MW) Ensure Scottish Water and Scotgov share information to ensure work streams are coherent with RLUPs.**

#### ii RLUP Pilot update Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park (Harriet Donald)

Currently determining scope of resources and grants, with plan to employ consultants for stakeholder mapping, form stakeholder groups and working groups (around policy and practice).

Hope to update with more info by August.

Two current workstreams:

1. Strathard project - community-led landscape what communities value in landscape? – consultation closed – how do we develop land use framework from that?

2. From private and public funding developing natural capital approaches framework to drive land use change ideas and projects, Also looking at nat cap approaches in 2 specific areas of park as part of pilot within National Park.

#### iii. Update on recent University of Edinburgh workshops (Kirsty Blackstock meeting note below)

On behalf of Leo Peskett (U of E) working on UKRI landscapes Decisions programme

Project: “Bridging the national and local in landscape decision making: building effective regional partnerships that deliver on climate policy objectives “

(runs to Sept 2022) to support RLUP Pilot coordination network (collectively and individually). We ran a 2 hour confidential workshop with presentation (extract attached) on governance and then inputs from Tweed Forum, Scottish Borders Council and CNPA on their take on RLUP governance, followed by break out groups. Overall, there was recognition that RLUPs are important, potential to be useful, and challenging to get right. Many governance issues (who is a partner, when/how to engage, scale) depends on role/function/purpose. The overall objective is clear but RLUP role in steering/implementing national policy is less clear (e.g. influence on agri-environmental funding) and this influences who is a partner and how you work in partnership. Questions raised for further reflection: What is success? How link to Regional Spatial Strategies? What is the added value of RLUPs overcrowded landscape? And how to

identify/use 'best' Nat Cap Tools? Note that those interested in the learning from the previous pilots (piloting the development of a Regional Land Use Framework, not the partnership) – information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-regional-land-use-framework-pilots/pages/1/>

<https://ecosystemsknowledge.net/natcap-project/aberdeenshire-regional-land-use-pilot>

<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/05b9b148-6bcc-48a4-a843-5eb681300281/resource/699c37d2-9223-4f04-8605-088a375f5748/download/aberdeenshire-land-use-strategy-pilot-final-report.pdf>

<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/aberdeenshire-land-use-strategy-pilot>

**Action - (All) Group are invited to follow up on any aspect of the workshops with Kirsty Blackstock.**

iv. ECom/JHI event update and options (Rory McLeod & discussion)

Proposal for an ECom workshop with JHI and CEH around catchment-based approaches, to be held in October or November.

Draft outline of an event:

Event question: *“How do we improve the effectiveness of catchment and land-use partnerships?”*

Keynote speakers: Some ideas...

1. Partnerships as policy implementers.
2. An RLUP representative talking from their own experience.
3. Experience and potential of private sector involvement (e.g. ex Poole Harbour chair from Wessex Water?)

Breakout groups: Some ideas...

1. How do we judge success in RLUPs?
2. How do RLUPs link to regional spatial strategies?
3. How to implement natural capital tools and data?

“Nature-based solutions” and/or “natural capital” as a concept to combine these issues around goal setting, policy and implementation, funding arrangements, cross-sectoral stakeholder representation and actions.

Why should people attend? The event needs to provide an opportunity for invitees to learn from each other, explore knotty issues, and share ideas for ways to progress.

**Action - (All) If anyone in the group has suggestions for the keynote speakers or breakout room discussions for the ECom/JHI RLUPs event please contact Rory McLeod**

v. RLUPS Summary & next steps:

1. Invitation to Group members from SG to join Stakeholder Roundtable 25 August from 13:00 – 15:00 for RLUPs:

To begin national-level stakeholder engagement, Scotgov are hosting a roundtable event. (Agenda to follow.)

The event will provide an opportunity to feed-in to the Regional Land Use Partnerships, highlight land use priorities, and learn more about the data-led natural capital approach being developed with the pilot regions. There will be an opportunity to meet representatives from the pilots, who will also be carrying out their own regional stakeholder engagement separately as the project progresses.

For those interested in attending, email [regionallandusepartnerships@gov.scot](mailto:regionallandusepartnerships@gov.scot)  
Up to 100 attendees will be assigned a place on a first come first served basis.

2. Members of the group can input to RLUPS thinking through the Natural Capital Policy unit, (Ross J & Peter P) and develop ideas within our group.
3. Get involved with our local RLUPS pilots where we are local stakeholders, and encourage our members to do so if representative organisation eg SLE.
4. Develop ESCOM event for wider sharing of knowledge around RLUPS

Other suggestions for group re: RLUPS?

Harriet Donald – What is the overall purpose of RLUPS? Prioritising areas public spend will then deliver, or ultimately giving them ownership of public funds? Can we feed our experience/perspectives into those discussions around Phase 3?

Action – (MC & PR) - Agenda item(s) for future meeting – underlying RLUP function, purpose, and how best to feed-in ideas?

## 4. Update on projects and member activity

- NatureScot - NCAPP (Natural Capital Pilot Programme) - (Stuart Shaw)

i) Overview:

The purpose of this programme is to inform what future rural support outside of the Common Agricultural Policy might look like. (£1.5 million budget for 2021/22.) Rural support could be developed to contribute to transformative land use change in Scotland, by restoring nature and reducing our country's contribution to climate change. Refocusing future rural support with a stronger emphasis on investing in natural capital can help to make land-based businesses more resilient, support jobs, and strengthen Scotland's green brand.

The programme governance structure has recently been enhanced, and is run day to day by NatureScot Programme board, with an external advisory group. A steering group has also been set up, with Scotgov involvement.

1. POBAS (Piloting an Outcomes Based Approach.) – now in Phase 3 – using scorecard approach on field levels to achieve outcome based approach.  
Staffing resources increased inc: Project Manager and Officers.  
Strathspey and Shetland pilots underway, with testing scorecards in the field to follow, with new staff across 7 pilot areas.
2. The Natural Capital Digital (Iceni) app using tech to be user-friendly less paperwork for farmers..  
A Pre-Commercial Agreement has been agreed with IceniEarth through CivTech to further develop the app, improve functionality and broaden testing scorecards in the field with farmers.  
Scorecard being tested by farmers in Strathspey pilot, with scorecards for other habitats to be

rolled out soon.

Receiving constructive dialogue with RPID about integrating systems – data integration a big issue. Currently too many systems not in sync with one another.

3. Natural Capital Assessment Template – see Kirsty Hutchison’s update below.

Aims to test, develop and simplify how the Natural Capital Protocol could be applied to land-based businesses for land managers/farmers/advisors, and its potential use as the basis for a whole farm plan approach to future funding.

Phase 1 – A draft template was completed and tested on four land based businesses.

Update – about to tender for Phase 2 in the coming months. Testing at farm level natural capital assessment template with much broader representative selection of farms and farm systems than Phase 1, to improve accuracy of assessment and mapping.

Develop rolling out looking at training and how that works for farmers – up-skilling important.

Discussion & questions:

Stephen Young – Re: Phase 2 for further testing, SLE happy to help with recruitment to get range of landholdings involved.

Kirsty Hutchinson – Good representation for the templates important. Scotgov keen to ensure random sampling involved with set criteria as to landholding. Some farmers have already been approached, and some will be selected from a random sample.

**Action – (KH) to pick up with Stephen Young to discuss different farming categories**

**Action – (KH) – To share with group when tender goes out for the project contract and to update on the approach**

4. It is envisaged that work on Testing a Natural Capital Approach at a Landscape Scale will begin later in 2021 and could help inform the Regional Land Use Partnership pilots, helping make the link between natural capital approaches at the farm-scale, and how this translates to landscape-scale approaches

Update – Still at scoping stage with new staff coming on board. Looking at Islay as a good test case to trial approach, to make link between farm-scale and regional/catchment scale, and use a natural capital assessment approach to explore issues related to land-use and conservation.

- Also in parallel developing a biodiversity audit for farm-level assessments as a minimum standard across all farm holdings.

- Women in Agri/young entrants/crofts/estates – any additional thoughts about who to target?

Discussion & questions:

Harriet – Endorsing the randomness aspect – make sure it reaches people who aren’t fully up to speed with tech and internet connectivity.

S Shaw – Important to reach out to beyond just more engaged members of farming community

Harriet – LLTNPA are working with a mix of units with differing levels of engagement, happy to follow up to discuss with NatureScot

**Action – (SS) to follow up with Harriet Donald to discuss lessons around engagement for LLTNPA as appropriate.**

- Scottish Land & Estates – (Stephen Young)

Information-sharing with SLE members big part of current focus, to raise awareness about new ideas and build momentum.

SLE are engaging with RLUPs & farmer-led groups on future rural support, and trying to make sure linkages are there between environmental/economic/and social benefits

Recent webinars have focused on both land reform and woodland in a natural capital context.

SLE convened a panel with some of the chairs of the farmer led groups – exploring rural support and what is needed to deliver it in the future.

Post-covid, some walk and talk events are coming up focusing on integrated land management and different land uses at different times.

Key event at end of September titled, “The Business of Climate Change”, it will explore ways to remove the friction that can exist between environment/climate and business. Lord Bevan from CCC and Dieter Helm will both speak.

Paul Richardson has just joined SLE as Policy Advisor, and will lead on agriculture and climate change. SLE are keen to work closely with others in the group, and Paul will shortly assume the coordinator role in place of Rory McLeod.

- Scottish Water – (Mark Williams)

Jared Stewart’s recent focus has been on peatland, and water quality catchment work, still focussed on stretch goal of 400ha of restoration in this financial year.

Working to secure land agreements - no red flags being raised, but very contingent on third party agreements to progress

More broadly – main focus for Scottish Water is developing an approach to biodiversity and natural capital, to be agreed at Director level that sets out investment planning moving forward.

Important first stages – around baselines for natural capital stocks/biodiversity status, and within that trying to review methods for doing this. Need to establish a metric, likely to be a biodiversity net gain metric, similar to Biodiversity 2.0 (now a 3.0) based on Natural England models.

Also in discussion with Scotgov (SSE had done some work to adapt Biodiversity 2.0 for Scottish context)

In terms of catchments discussed by Kirsty Hutchison - Glendevon is biggest opportunity in terms of peatland restoration but very contingent on third parties.

- SEPA - (Cath Preston)

Nicola Melville is currently working with Ross Johnston from Scotgov around developing ‘4 capitals approach’ and also with Scottish Water.

Other main area of work with natural capital is through Scottish Conservation Finance Pioneers initiative, a working group of the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital, on which SEPA sit as part of the Leadership group.

Nine separate projects, or ‘pillars’, exist within this space in differing states of development.

SEPA are focused on Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENS), and are also working to develop the Riverwoods and V&DL initiatives

**Action – (All) for any more info Lucy Filby from SEPA happy to chat to the group about progression of LENS.**

V&DL– core pillar in the ConFi initiative – Louise Bond from SEPA recently spoke with SNIB and Deryck Irving (Green Action Trust) about progressing the drive for greater investment in V&DL, that aims to deliver multiple benefits through building on conservation and natural capital principles.

**Action - (All) Louise Bond can provide more detail about the V&DL “pillar” of the Route Map to any member of the group interested.**

**Action - (All) Contact Rory McLeod for info on joining Scottish Conservation Finance Pioneers group on Basecamp.**

COP 26 partnership – The Global Ethical Finance Initiative (GEFI), are organising a satellite event at Loch Lomond Ross Priory during COP26 entitled 'Finance for Nature'. It will be a COP26 international fringe venue for COP26 VIP delegates and Coalition partner delegates.

The Scottish Forum has been invited to join as a partner in this event, with the Conservation Finance Pioneer Leadership group are the main liaison with GEFI to organise this activity.

SEPA are working to develop this opportunity to showcase natural capital initiatives in Scotland, with a key challenge around private finance, how to drive that alongside public and philanthropic funding?

Discussion & questions:

Mary Christie – Nature-based jobs and skills (with Becky Shaw) – stakeholder group flagged that they need guidance on green finance so NatureScot are commissioning guidance for land managers on green finance, currently out for tender.

One key concern around taking private investment, there are perceived disincentives and implications for land tenure/tax/ accessing other funds etc

Will be wide-ranging, and will also cover peatland, (Peatland Code/Peatland Action Funding) although won't go into huge detail on peatland initially

- Scottish Forestry (Pat Snowdon)

Forest Research studies

1. Study to be published in next few months valuing environmental health benefits of forestry, specifically avoided NHS costs (alleviate depression etc) - first time value put on it.

2. Also producing a study on the carbon benefits of different forest management regimes

What is the best way to mitigate climate change through planting woodlands?

Draft report finished, final version to available in a few weeks, ahead of professionally launch.

BSI Standard for Natural Capital Accounting published in June.

Generated considerable interest, (400 attending webinar) - how will it be used?

Forestry England plan to trial to see if their own Natural Capital Accounts meet the BSI standard.

ISO 14068 standard developed for carbon neutrality – important because can guide organisations about how to be carbon neutral.

Will be released over next couple of years.

Woodland Carbon Code - Over 1000 projects registered. Not all will be validated, and rules have been changed for registration, but more generally this signifies a big increase in interest.

Discussion & questions:

Kirsty Blackstock – Woodland Code to move beyond just considering Carbon?  
Biodiversity has been considered.  
Forest Research ran webinar on Woodland Water Code last year.

Pat - Woodland Carbon Code Broaden carbon scope first before other ecosystem services. Although here is a tool on Woodland Carbon Code website which allows you to assess themselves against at other benefits.

## 5. Research Links updates

SEFARI Fellowship – Natural capital and food chain SMEs (Rory McLeod updating for Alistair McVittie)

The online survey has now completed for the Fellowship, which asked respondents about their business' relationship with nature and nat cap concepts. (see attached doc for more detail)

Key points:

- Sample dominated by businesses in the agriculture sector, although many had multiple enterprises.
- Most have engaged with natural capital.
- Key motivations were personal or family interest, moral incentives, demand from consumers and social benefits.
- Main benefits were economic, customer satisfaction and innovation.
- Main barriers were costs or funding and lack of skills.
- There was no one preferred means of support for integrating nature, suggesting multiple approaches would be useful.

Alistair recently presented the results of the online survey to an online seminar of RESAS staff (following presentation from Ross Johnston and Peter Phillips), with approx. 50 participants.

ESCom update (Rory McLeod updating for Marc Metzger)

See update above in agenda item: 3. iii. ESCom/JHI event update and options (Rory McLeod & discussion)

Event - Cashel Forest Trust Natural Capital Accounts - Together with Peter Phillips (SG Natural Capital team, & Cashel Forest Trust trustee) Marc has been supporting a student to develop Natural Capital Accounts for the Cashel Forest Trust.

There will be a webinar next Thursday to present and discuss the findings.

<https://cashel.org.uk/>

**Action - (RMc) to share Cashel event details and joining instructions after the meeting**

JHI update - (Kirsty Blackstock)

Paola Ovando Pol is leaving to take a tenured post at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) – we will recruit to replace her post (and additional post on governance to complement the valuation/accounting research). Paola will continue her work on forest management economic decision models to estimate timber production, carbon sequestration, financial returns of woodland expansion projects in Scotland (with Alessandro Gimona and team). She will continue to contribute to other H2020

projects – FRAMEwork (contact Graham Begg) on application of natural capital accounting methods as part of the sustainability indicators system to evaluate the performance on biodiversity farming practices and system at the landscape and farm level in a group of Advanced farmer clusters. She will contribute to the H2020 project FirEUrisk (contact Michaela Roberts and Maria Nijnik) on Integrated capitals approach to assess damage of wildfires in Scotland.

The RESAS programme 2022-2027 to be submitted end of July. 5 projects being submitted under the topic 'natural capital'

- Appraising CC effects on NC with a link to H2020 FirEUrisk project (contact Mike Rivington)
- Improving Valuation data and methods (Al McVittie) of agricultural soils; participatory ESS valuation (Maria Nijnik); stock-taking and gap filling (SRUC – contact Al McVittie)
- Using NC concepts and data for change (Kerry Waylen & Mark Reed)
- Other topics also of interest to the group e.g. B3 on Good agricultural practice, C3 on Integrated Land Use, Rest of Theme D (air, water, soil, biodiversity), Theme E – rural economy, rural communities, land reform.

There is ongoing work on Glensaugh as a 'Climate Positive Farming Initiative' – building on Paola's NCA analysis <https://glensaugh.hutton.ac.uk/>

There are ongoing European projects on food systems <https://lowinfood.eu/> agricultural knowledge systems and advice <https://www.agrilink2020.eu/> Mountain value chains <https://www.moving-h2020.eu/moving-news/>

Kirsty will start a project on upscaling Nature-based solutions and habitat restoration (MERLIN) in October 2021. NatureScot is an official partner in the project, and the work in the Forth Catchment on peatland restoration and natural flood management also involves Scottish Water/SEPA who are working with CEH – peatland restoration and NFM in Forth Estuary. There is lots of opportunity to interact with the Routemap sustainable finance work in this project. Given the breadth of work ongoing at Hutton across social, computational, environmental, ecological and molecular sciences, please ask Kirsty if you have specific issue or question to help facilitate an introduction to the relevant people.

## 6. Discussion of Group's goals for 2021/22

Confirm agreed goals to pass to Scotgov, Scottish Forum steering group, and thoughts on how we can progress. - (Rory McLeod & all)

We agreed to:

1. Promote knowledge sharing amongst members involved in natural capital approaches in land use and management across sectors – public, private, research and third sector
2. Support Regional Land Use Partnership pilots individually, through working with individual pilots, and with SG leads to support a co-ordinated approach in the application of natural capital thinking and sharing of knowledge and experience
3. Provide and maintain an overview of current activity and experience, and take opportunities to promote this collectively and individually, including through SFNC website.

**Action – (RMC/MC/PR) - Group agreed that it would be useful to share meeting note on the Scottish Forum website.**

## 7. Outputs/actions (Summary)

**Action - (All) Familiarise ourselves with Justice Commission recommendations given likely importance Scotgov will attach, and not to exacerbate inequality amid the drive to tackle climate change.**

**Action - (All) Group are invited to reflect on Alice's presentation (attached) and feed in individually or through the SLMG as RLUPs develop.**

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