

SFoNC Sustainable Land Management Working Group - Meeting Outputs

October 21, 2021: 10:00 to 12:00

MS Teams meeting

Chair: Mary Christie (NatureScot)

Coordinator: Rory McLeod (Scottish Forum on Natural Capital) / Paul Richardson (Scottish Land & Estates)

Attending:

Mary Christie (NatureScot); Rory McLeod (SFoNC); Anne Gray (Heather Trust); Jared Stewart (Scottish Water); Mark Metzger (University of Edinburgh); Hamish Walls (SAOS); Paul Richardson (SLE); Alice Hunter (Scottish Government); Sarah Cowie (NFUS); Kirsty Blackstock (James Hutton Institute); Ross Lilley (NatureScot); Kirsty Summers (Scotch Whisky Association); Kate Bellew (Crown Estate Scotland); Catherine Preston (SEPA).

Apologies:

Louise Bond (SEPA); Maria Bellissimo (CONFOR); Kirsty Hutchinson (NatureScot); Roger Burton (Heather Trust); Alistair McVittie (JHI); Stephen Young (SLE); Ross Johnston (ScotGov).

Purpose:

- To update on policy, projects, and research links pertinent to group members
- To identify how the group can support RLUP stakeholder engagement and pilots
- To discuss natural capital accounting

1. Welcome & update on SLMG – (Mary Christie)

Focus of the group is to share and update each other on policy and research that is relevant to sustainable land management in the context of natural capital approaches. Our particular focus at the moment is to support the Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) and frameworks pilots.

2. Scottish Government policy and data update – (Ross Johnston)

Rory McLeod (SFoNC) highlighted a recent report on data from Natural Capital Ireland which may be of interest to the group. Link as follows: https://7b5267e1-c27b-40fd-9211-f4a6c5c30b12.filesusr.com/ugd/94066f_9cdc0d494b734b06ac6be6a9007e9dc5.pdf.

Apologies from Ross Johnston, though Alice Hunter was able to provide a high level update on data.

RESAS are considering a business case for an integrated data programme which aims to create a single source of data, from which apps can be created. This is due to be taken to the Land Use Transformation Portfolio Board in the near future, with a business case being developed. This is a longer term project.

Other work is ongoing to create apps which will support the RLUPs in the form of an open source data catalogue of natural capital assets and ecosystem services. There is also going to be a GIS spatial mapping tool showing where the assets are in each region. User testing will be carried out with the pilots and more widely thereafter.

Kate Bellew (Crown Estate Scotland) asked about timeframes and contacts for the RLUPs apps and GIS tools. Hopefully by the end of this financial year (depending on resource), and members can email Alice directly for more information / access etc.

3. Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) stakeholder events update – (Alice Hunter)

A copy of Alice's presentation has been included in the email with these outputs, as well as summary reports from the RLUPs stakeholder roundtable events.

Stakeholder engagement is key to the success of the RLUPs pilots and since grant funding was awarded in Summer 2021, they have been recruiting staff, developing plans, identifying stakeholders etc.

At the national level, the Scottish Government RLUPs team has led on stakeholder engagement, with the regions only recently starting to identify stakeholders and begin engagement at the regional level. The national level will be more policy focused, whereas the regional level will be much more focused on the detail of the frameworks. Most recently, the ScotGov RLUPs team has hosted three stakeholder engagement events with Local Action Group (LAG) chairs, public bodies and a wider stakeholder list.

The key themes coming out of the stakeholder events relate to managing expectations, land use change, taking a bottom-up approach, the importance of engagement, influencing mechanisms and taking a holistic approach, keeping data and natural capital knowledge simple, and complemented by local knowledge. Further detail is available in the attached presentation and reports.

Alice recommended stakeholders reaching out to their local regional pilots to begin to build relationships. Community engagement is a priority for Ministers. The contact details for the five regional pilots are as follows:

Cairngorms NPA – fionaholmes@cairngorms.co.uk

Highland Region – donna.macallister@highland.gov.uk

Loch Lomond & Trossachs NPA – Landmanagement@lochlomond-trossachs.org

North East Region – sheena.lamont@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

South of Scotland – RLUP@sose.scot

The contact details for the ScotGov RLUPs team are also included in Alice's presentation.

Discussion and Q&A followed:

Paul Richardson (SLE) made the point that at the national level there seems to be a lot of enthusiasm, but having discussed RLUPs with regional colleagues this did not seem to be the case, particularly in the national parks. How do we get engagement at the regional level where it is most important? Alice explained that some areas have already been through the first round of pilots, though Ministers want to trial the current type of RLUPs pilots and the ScotGov team will support a variety of methods to facilitate community engagement. Alice also highlighted the SNP / Green Party agreement which commits to investigating how RLUPs might have influence and the recent Programme for Government which commits to another phase of pilots post-2023.

Kirsty Blackstock (JHI) attended the recent Challenging Uplands Futures conference where RLUPs were discussed. There seems to be general enthusiasm, with people keen for more landscape scale collaboration. Concern remains about expectation management and what the outcomes will be. In terms of engagement, there are communities of interest (such as land managers), and communities of place (such as residents and visitors) which will need to be managed differently. Land management needs to be part of the discussion as well as land use change.

Action (AH) - Alice will give an update on the community engagement proposal at the next meeting (provided it is signed off).

Anne Gray (Heather Trust) continued on the theme of the conference, highlighting that a key theme was the importance of communicating what is required (from the national level), with the how it is done coming from the bottom-up. Provided the outputs are clearly communicated and refined at the regional level, how this is achieved is an important conversation for land managers to lead on.

Hamish Walls (SAOS) shared his experience working with a group of dairy farmers in southwest Scotland (though not an RLUPs pilot). Many farmers have a long way to go in terms of natural capital therefore keeping it simple is important. What is important is a common approach and funding for change, though it is not yet clear where this will come from.

Mark Metzger (University of Edinburgh) has previously done some work with Forest Research on the Southern Ayrshire and Galloway Biosphere which is part of the South of Scotland RLUPs pilot. A summary report has recently been published and there was a consensus amongst the stakeholders. Link to the report: <http://doi.org/10.7488/era/1365>.

4. ECom event update – (Rory McLeod)

The workshop is a joint ECom (Ecosystem Services Community Scotland) / JHI (James Hutton Institute) project exploring catchment partnerships and land use partnerships. ECom is a community of members across the public and private sectors. The event is an opportunity to learn from each other, share ideas and ways to progress, linked to policy priorities for Scottish Government.

There is an early proposed agenda, lasting approximately 1.5hrs with 3 keynote speakers; “Partnerships as Policy Implementers” Penny Lawson, Spey Catchment Initiative; “The Potential of Private Sector Involvement” Fiona Bowles, Poole Harbour Catchment Initiative; “Hybrid / Blended Finance in the Riverwoods Project” Rory Sandison, Scottish Wildlife Trust. This will be followed by discussion, Q&A, and breakout sessions.

The event will take place on January the 18th 2022. The long list of invitees is being finalised (to be issued in November), anticipating 40 to 50 attendees.

Action – (All) If members have any proposed invitees, they can email Rory McLeod directly.

5. Heather Trust and Moorland Forum Update – (Anne Gray)

Heather Trust: Earlier this year, they ran successful natural capital events with NatureScot and SFoNC members which were well subscribed. It would be good to run some more events in 2022 in the form of site visits.

Action – (All) If members have any ideas for 2022 events, they can email Anne Gray directly.

In England, an organisation called “Tell us Natural Capital” has recently been setup. They are keen that land managers are more engaged with the process of developing natural capital accounts, and run a pilot project in the North Pennines with moorland owners. Looking to work as a brokerage to put together a portfolio of assets that would be of interest to investors.

Moorland Forum: Managed a site visit in the summer to Auchlyne Estate, Glen Dochart which is a mix of trying to deliver ‘public good’ whilst managing to breakeven / make a small profit and support the local

community. Conversation also included peatland restoration, ecosystem services, riparian planting, and active floodplain management.

The Moorland Forum are looking to change format at their next meeting in November to produce 'think piece' discussion papers as an output from the Forum, supplemented with case study work. This will focus on broad climate change / biodiversity topics, with the first topic being 'rewilding' and its relationship with moorlands.

Action - (All) If members have any thoughts for other topics, they can email Anne Gray directly.

Mary Christie (NatureScot) highlighted that NatureScot has been developing their thoughts on rewilding. Link here: <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19607370.we-part-nature-scotland-need-work-it/>

Action - (All) If anyone has ideas for events SFoNC can run then please get in touch with Paul Richardson.

6. Natural Capital Pilot Programme (NCAPP) – (Ross Lilley / Mary Christie)

Ross kindly provided an update of the NCAPP programme whilst on holiday in Falmouth.

At the national level, they are testing tools for rural support at the landscape, land holding and field parcel level, which is informed by the Land Use Transformation Programme Board (ScotGov), the Biodiversity Strategy Group, the CAP Transformation Board and the Agriculture Reform Implementation Oversight Board (ARIOB).

The natural capital approach is likely to be increasingly central to the work of NatureScot, particularly in relation to land use change policy.

The scorecard approach has been tested on around 70 to 80 crofts and farms, using an app to score wader habitat, hedgerows etc. to deliver agri-environment type outcomes. The next stage is to broaden the scope of the app to include the development of an on-farm biodiversity audit, which the farmer-led climate groups were keen to progress.

The second stage is to test the natural capital assessment template with a series of land managers across Scotland and this has been put out to contract. ScotGov may want to look at this as a way to evidence future public and private support.

At the landscape scale, a contract is almost finalised to look at a natural capital approach to land use challenges on Islay. This is a case study which will create a land use community group to identify the challenges on Islay and how a natural capital approach can address those. Separately, they are supporting the RLUPs pilots where possible at the national and regional level to test how they might use natural capital approaches in their area.

The team has identified a requirement for an open access template to act as a starting point to be used at the landscape scale, simplifying the process for land managers. This is in partnership with RESAS.

Discussion and Q&A followed. The landholding template will be available and share with members in the next few weeks.

Alice Hunter (ScotGov) is working with Climate Xchange over the rest of this financial year looking at partnerships that already exist using a natural capital approach, pulling together examples that the RLUPs will be able to draw on. They will also develop framework guidance for taking a natural capital approach.

Hamish Walls (SAOS) was interested to know once opportunities are identified, how the landscape scale template would filter down to individual holdings and fields. There is a role for the RLUPs in exploring the mechanisms for achieving this, with buy in from the land management sector.

Sarah Cowie (NFUS) asked about feedback on the scorecard approach from farmers and is this something that Ross could share. Feedback from previous trials when it was paper-based is available, where there was overwhelming support from farmers and land managers. Still need to thoroughly test if the scoring criteria is relevant for the desired outcomes.

Anne Gray (Heather Trust) reflected that one of the challenges for land managers in terms of natural capital, is to understand all of the opportunities that are available to them and make choices based on this.

Kate Bellew (Crown Estate Scotland) are creating a masterplan at their Glenlivet Estate, and a natural capital approach fits well with this. Kate is interested to know what tools might be best at the estate level. NatureScot hopes that there might be a free to use tool with an underlying set of data so that land managers are not having to replicate what is already. If there is a requirement for more detailed, location specific information then there is a role for private sector providers.

There is a lot of support from the ARIOB and we can anticipate an announcement from Mairi Gougeon soon on the elements she wants to take forward from the ARIOB. There is confidence that the scorecard outcome-based approach is likely to be one area which is developed.

7. Natural Capital Accounting Standards and Principles – (Mary Christie)

Working group formed following the natural capital roundtables with land owned and managed by public bodies to develop principles for natural capital accounting.

Mary Christie (NatureScot) shared a presentation from her colleague Tom McKenna (Economist, NatureScot). Tom is moving on to a new opportunity and a replacement is being recruited soon.

The working group agreed that it would be beneficial for agencies to work together to develop a consistent approach to natural capital accounting on public land. The principles are very much a working draft and not intended to replace the Natural Capital Protocol, Corporate Natural Capital Accounting Framework or the British Standard for Natural Capital Accounting.

Split into three sections; *why undertake natural capital accounting on public land; what methods should be used for natural capital accounts on land; how should the results be presented and communicated?*

Mary explained that organisations should be clear on the reasons for undertaking the accounts and how they will inform decision making. Accounts should include biodiversity and maintenance costs, where possible, as well as the type, extent and quality of natural capital assets.

The timescale for the account values should reflect the primary habitat / land cover, e.g. 100 years may be appropriate for woodland. Discount rates should conform with UK Treasury Green Book guidance and may vary over the timescale.

Accounts should be clear and transparent, so that anyone can understand them, with sources clearly cited. Accounts should also be updated at a suitable frequency for the nature of land holdings, and reported alongside or within annual financial accounts.

The working group will meet again on Monday the 25th of October to make any final changes and hope to be formally endorsed in December 2021 by the Public Sector Leaders' Natural Capital Roundtable.

Action (MC) – Share Natural Capital Accounting Principles (draft) presentation after the working group meeting on the 25th.

Discussion followed about the importance of consistency and the detail (particularly relating to valuing natural capital assets), as well as evaluating the value from natural capital accounts and the impact on decision making. DEFRA have produced standards to assist with valuing natural capital assets.

EU CAP reform is going through a review process, though not entirely sure on where they are with natural capital accounting specifically. There may be opportunities to link natural capital accounting with quality assurance schemes, branding opportunities, value chains etc.

Action (PR) – Future meeting speaker on value chains, business reporting and how this might drive natural capital data gathering and assessments.

8. Discussion of SLMG Goals for 2021/22

Carry on updating members to raise awareness and supporting the RLUPs where possible.

Next meeting towards the end of January 2022 (after ECom event).

9. Outputs / Actions

Action (AH) - Alice will give an update on the community engagement proposal at the next meeting (provided it is signed off).

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Action - (All) If members have any ideas for 2022 events, they can email Anne Gray directly.

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