

Scottish Borders pilot regional Land Use Framework Consultation report

The Consultation on the Scottish Borders pilot regional Land Use Framework was approved by Scottish Borders Council on 18th December 2014 and the consultation was launched on 19th December for a six week period until February 16th 2015.

The consultation was web-based being hosted on the Council's website. The format for consultation followed that for Council local policy, with a press release sent to local press and the consultation was promoted via targeted emails to the stakeholder list collated during the pilot Process with the support of Tweed Forum. The consultation launch has been highlighted at a public event on the 16th December 2015, hosted by RSA at the Council's Headquarters.

Tweed Forum held a series of four workshops in January 2015 to promote the consultation, combined meetings were held in the case study catchment areas Yarrow (Ettrick & Yarrow catchments), Reston (Eye water & Leet water catchments), Eddleston (Eddleston & Gala water catchments) and Midlem (Ale water).

Press coverage was limited but the consultation workshops did receive some coverage in local papers. Social media was used with Twitter feeds sent out on five occasions.

A set of 12 consultation questions was produced to guide the consultation. These focussed on the Framework document (information provided, process and consultation leading to its production), the stock, opportunity, interaction and multiple benefit maps, how they might be used, actions set out in an Interim Action Plan and a postscript and monitoring proposals. The consultation information including the Framework document, three technical mapping reports, stakeholder consultation report and the draft Environmental Report of the SEA. The maps could be viewed by a web-map viewer hosted by our mapping consultants Environment Systems Ltd. This enabled maps to be viewed to approximately 1:50,000 scale. It should be noted that the consultation was not on the final mapping tool which is still to be developed as an application on the Local View Fusion web-mapping service about to be launched by the Council.

A total of 29 consultation responses were received plus some additional comments from one NGO, which have been included for ease of analysis and so points raised are not lost. Of the respondents, 13 replied as individuals of whom 5 were farmers and 2 small estate owners and one a community council member. 7 responses were received from statutory agencies including 2 from Council officers. 9 NGOs responded including 6 environmental organisations and 2 land manager organisations.

It is disappointing not to have received more responses, however, this perhaps reflects the complexity of the information provided and also, the timing around Christmas was probably not optimal, but was unavoidable.

The verbatim consultation responses have been recorded in a spreadsheet (*Land Use Consultation Feedback – Data Protection final.xls*), submitted as part of this report. Personal details have been removed where requested.

Summary of Key points raised:

The consultation provides an opportunity to provide feedback on the pilot Framework directly to Scottish Government as part of the end reporting of the pilot. The feedback received can also help inform the post-pilot project work. This report should be read in conjunction with the full verbatim responses included in the spreadsheet.

The responses were generally positive with support for the collaborative work of the partnership including the Council and Tweed Forum. There was general support for the overall outcomes of the pilot.

Framework

In general responses were positive to the Framework document and the process producing it, for example:

“We think the framework reads well, uses simple language, is thoughtful and informative. The Scottish Borders Team have done a good job.” (SNH)

“We are impressed by the vision and hard work to produce this much needed pilot strategy” (Borders Organic Gardeners)

In answer to Question 1 of the consultation: **Q1. Does the Framework document provide enough background information to explain the pilot project?** 24(80%) answered Yes, 2 (7%) answered No and 4 (13%) did not answer this question.

Some key points were raised; a user friendly version may help with interpretation and awareness raising, the Framework should clearly reflect that some key policy drivers cross cut multiple land uses, notably SRDP and the role of biodiversity in supporting ecosystems services could be reinforced in the Framework

“The Framework document could be interpreted as working on the principle that if the other ecosystem services are looked after then enhanced or maintained biodiversity will be drawn along in their wake. The reality is the converse – we need to look after our biodiversity for the sake of all the other benefits we get from the environment.”(Butterfly Conservation Scotland, East District)

In answer to Question 2 of the consultation: **Q2: Are you satisfied with the process undertaken to produce the Framework?** 24(80%) answered Yes, 2 (7%) answered No and 4 (13%) did not answer this question.

In answer to these concerns, we would say that the Framework is an innovative document but includes complex concepts at this stage. As the process develops further under the national LUS, future strategies will be more concise as some of the concepts become embedded in policies, plans and strategies. The challenge for integrating biodiversity conservation is one we will need to consider carefully as part of next stage discussions.

Consultation

The consultation itself included a lot of detail and was time constrained. A number of respondents reflected on the short available time to consider the information and noted that part of the consultation period was over Christmas and that some workshops clashed with other events.

In answer to Question 3 of the consultation: **Q3: Are you satisfied with the consultation undertaken to produce the Framework?** 23 (77%) answered Yes, 1 (3%) answered No and 6 (20%) did not answer this question.

Maps

There were some problems with the map viewing, mainly linked to an up to date web browser being required to view maps (this was a particular problem for statutory agencies).

For the maps, key points were raised about ensuring that datasets were up to date and accurate. A number of respondents could see how the tool could be used at a strategic level, others could not see how it could be applied at a farm or local level.

Of land managers responding, two farmers said the maps did not accurately match their farm or estate, undermining their confidence in using it. One farmer said it matched his farm well. A common theme mentioned was the need to ground-truth the maps.

In answer to Question 4 of the consultation: **Q4: Are you satisfied with the content and clarity of the maps shown?** 16 (53%) answered Yes, 5 (17%) answered No and 9 (30%) did not answer this question.

Multiple benefit maps were largely well-received providing a basis for further discussion.

Interaction maps were less well received with a perception that they were stating the obvious, though in doing so they could be helpful to inform further discussions about land use or project work.

In answer to Question 5 of the consultation: **Q5: Are the mapped sets of interactions between different potential land uses (constraints on possible land use options) together with the maps of potential multiple benefits helpful in guiding decisions about possible land use change?** 18 (60%) answered Yes, 6 (20%) answered No and 6 (20%) did not answer this question.

Some respondents identified that cultural heritage was not well integrated and that the mapping would not currently fully reflect its importance (noting that the Council and Historic Scotland are trying to address this with their pilot work on assessing Historic Land Use Value being carried out as part of the pilot)

A number of respondents reflected on biodiversity, about accounting more fully for opportunities for restoration of existing semi-natural habitat, and its key role as a supporting service and expressing this more clearly and noting the complexity of the rules underlying biodiversity & resilience compared to other ecosystems services.

The production of more user friendly guidance to support the maps was suggested by a number of respondents

A number of these issues can be addressed with the final tool development as an application on Local View. It should be noted that the tool is designed to be applied at a strategic scale to identify areas of search rather than field or farm scale use. The farm scale stage requires field based information as the next steps in the process.

The consultation was not on the final mapping tool which was not available at the time.

Potential uses

A number of respondents identified SRDP as a key driver for implementation and potential use of the tool to target actions. Other respondents urged caution in moving too quickly with the Framework and tool, suggesting further evaluation of the tool and dialogue with stakeholders to consider potential use and application of the tool. Some respondents could not see how it could be applied to their land holding or were not confident it could be applied meaningfully.

“It may be of use in reflection on the potential value of land in delivery of other services, and this be helpful in assessing the significance (or otherwise) of any proposed change of direction or use” (FCS)

Maps would form the basis of local decision making and form the starting point to discuss land use. A local or catchment scale was suggested by some for further consideration as the next steps and the multiple benefit maps seen as a key element of this including consideration of impacts on food production.

“Scottish Land & Estates would argue that the LUS should enable localised decision-making; it should be a starting point for people coming together to discuss land use” (SL&E)

“Land managers could use the maps to identify areas for improved land use – the multiple benefits maps will be particularly useful when working out the benefits of NFM to food production” (NFUS)

Council officers suggested potential uses of the tool to inform Flood Risk Management Plans and Neighbourhood services operations opportunities to manage natural capital on land managed by the Council.

Other respondents suggested potential application of the tool to inform Planning, including core paths networks and wind farms and the Local Development Plan.

We can consider how the tool can be applied during the next post-pilot stage, including a further evaluation of the tool and dialogue with key stakeholders.

Actions

In answer to Question 7 of the consultation: **Q7: Are you satisfied with the Interim action plan?** 19 (63%) answered Yes, 3 (10%) answered No and 8 (27%) did not answer this question.

In answer to Question 8 of the consultation: **Q8: Are you satisfied with the set of potential national, regional and local actions as proposed in the Postscript?** 14 (47%) answered Yes, 8 (23%) answered No and 8 (30%) did not answer this question.

The responses were largely supportive of the programme of actions suggested in the Interim Action plan for the 3 main pilot project organisations. This should include Localised action, with a local partnership which Tweed Forum are well placed to take forward *“Is there scope for one of the organisations Tweed Forum, for example, to establish a localised group that seeks to bring people together to develop localised plans?” (SLE)*

As above potential uses with SRDP were flagged up but were cautioned by some. There is a need to involve people in decision making, and highlight linkage between public benefit and public purse. *“NFUS are satisfied with the majority of the plan, however, we have concerns over the way SRDP funds could be targeted” (NFUS)*

“...a way to involve more people in decision making is vital; they may need to be guided but, in the end, the customer is king. Also, somehow the link between public benefit and public purse needs to be highlighted and explained” (James Pringle, private landowner).

“If the principle was adopted of encouraging a mixed land use policy, on individual farm by farm basis, then the varied landscape so much admired and the varied means of earning a livelihood in the valleys could continue”.(T Tennant, local farmer)

There is a need for better integration with River Basin Management Plans (RBMP 2) Further work on developing valuation and integrating Historic environments is encouraged. Actions are supported to be taken forward for carbon storage, recreation and biodiversity including at a landscape scale.

Further work is encouraged to assign value to benefits *“Work needs to be done on finding a way to put a value on benefits such as carbon storage, biodiversity etc” (Patricia Glennie, local farmer).* This was also noted by SNH *“It is noteworthy that no attempt was made to put monetary value to ecosystems services. This is something that may be desirable to develop in future”*

Some questioned the nature of actions as they were not S.M.A.R.T. and lead organisations were not identified and why the difference between the Interim Action Plan and the Postscript.

An observation was made contrasting the approaches of the Planning system and that they considered was suggested by the Framework *“While it is made clear that the LUS will lie outside the planning system, it is interesting to make an observation. With planning applications there will usually be the opportunity for members of the public to comment or raise objections. The overwhelming message from the Framework is that future decisions on changes or developments in land use will be largely in the hands of land use managers and other influential groups and the public will not be able to have any inputs despite the recognised value of landscapes, scenery and heritage in the Borders - all things which the public appreciate and many cherish.”*(Butterfly Conservation Scotland, East District)

Monitoring

It is recognised that monitoring will be a challenge but could focus on a set of local actions although with caution

“This is an important commitment as it will ensure the actions are pursued.” (SNH)

“Without a clear plan of action at the national level, the creation of monitoring frameworks would seem to be premature” (SLE).

“NFUS agrees that landscape change does not change rapidly but also that outputs from the interim action plan can be measured. Changes in land use will need to be tracked regularly in order to keep the maps relevant as an information tool” (NFUS)

In answer to Question 4 of the consultation: **Q11: Do you feel that the proposals for Monitoring and Assessment of this pilot are adequate for the purpose?**

15 (50%) answered Yes, 3 (10%) answered No and 12 (40%) did not answer this question.

Conclusion

In conclusion a range of views were received, in general support of the process, some concerns about the use of the tool but hopeful that momentum will be maintained particularly through a local partnership approach. Perhaps the response from one of the consultees, a landowner, captures this succinctly

“It is evident that the three main organisations SBC, TF and UD have worked well together to enable them to achieve what has been done to date, in starting to map Land Use in the Scottish Borders.

The Regional Land Use Framework is however still a work in progress. The three organisations should therefore continue in close collaboration and in a focused way to drive forward the Land use project they have begun.

The next step should be to focus on a smaller area or areas within the Scottish Borders to accurately map and to comprehensively explore (and where possible measure the benefits of) the interaction of the land uses in that area or areas, in close collaboration with the relevant managers and potential users of that land.”

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