

Understanding public-private catchment partnerships: insights for future partnerships to deliver multiple benefits

Summary of the discussions from the ELSEG meeting workshop, 25 January 2021

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This report summarises the discussions following the presentation on '*Understanding public-private catchment partnerships: insights for future partnerships to deliver multiple benefits*' by Kirsty Blackstock, as part of the ELSEG online meeting of 25 January 2021. The presentation showed the main findings from Deliverable 3 within the project formed by RESAS Research Deliverable 1.2.4 Objective 1.2 and Deliverable 6 within Research Deliverable 1.4.2bi. The presentation slides can be downloaded from <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/research/projects/balancing-multiple-goals-natural-resource-management>. The full report from this study will be available to download from February 2021.

The discussions took place online via Webex, with participants being divided into four breakout rooms, where they had 20 minutes to discuss one of the following questions:

1. What was the most surprising or interesting observation in the presentation?
2. Is there anything in the presentation that you disagreed with from your own experience or knowledge?
3. What further issues might need attention to translate these findings from catchments to other landscape partnerships?
4. What non-catchment partnerships or initiatives might be interested in discussing these insights?

Question 1: What was the most surprising or interesting observation in the presentation?

The group discussing this question included 10 participants working in academia, Scottish Government, Scottish Government agency, a private land-manager and environmental NGOs. Some but not all participants had direct experience of partnership working. The discussions included:

- There is not much career progression in partnerships, which implies the loss of institutional knowledge. This is related to the rapid turnover of staff, particularly in early career stages. This conflicts with the importance of building and maintaining relationships. It takes time to bring people together in a partnership, and there is a need to support long-term partnerships.
- Partnerships should not limit themselves to either 'steering' or 'doing' actions, but should retain a view of how each of these work.
- It is surprising how informal the governance of partnerships are, given the public funding they receive.
- It is surprising that partnerships often focus on relationships more than plans and their delivery.

- There is a need to distinguish the different roles of partnerships, including whether they generate funding. It is important for their actions to be visible.
- The success of a partnership depends on it being adaptive.
- Partnership objectives are not always easy to monitor and evaluate, particularly the higher-level aspirational objectives, and intangible objectives such as relationships. Involving land-managers more could address the difficulty of monitoring. However, monitoring and evaluating requires an independent party to bridge the gap between land managers and government agencies.

Question 2: Is there anything in the presentation that you disagreed with from your own experience or knowledge?

This group included 9 participants working in academia, an NGO, and Scottish Government Agencies. Their experience with partnerships ranged from no direct experience, experience through their academic research, and direct experience with partnership working. The discussion included:

- Nothing to disagree with, but some insights to focus on.
- Agreement that it is important to distinguish between partnerships steering or delivering actions, and this is not always recognised. Failure to understand these differences may be associated with partnerships not delivering.
- It is often not easy for the private sector to know their role in a partnership, particularly when joining a partnership where there are eNGOs who have shared ambitions and objectives.
- Fishery boards are good examples of private sector involvement in Catchment Partnerships. Partnerships can be helpful in recognising the efforts of the private sector (e.g. land managers) in voluntarily complying with policy, with their involvement based on win-win outcomes rather than top-down regulation. E.g. riparian plantings on the Upper Dee, where trees provide benefits for salmon fisheries as well as conservation outcomes.
- Partnerships are easiest when focussed on small areas with shared interests, over short time-scales, and with smaller scale of ambition.
- There may be a need for partnerships to work with further stakeholders such as those in the tourism industry, game estates, etc, but this increases the scale of ambition.
- The role of leadership as well as facilitation is very important to the initiation, maintenance and progress of partnerships.
- Partnerships may work well when there are win-win outcomes, but they may not consider trade-offs. Partnerships are good forums for discussion and sharing ideas but may not be adequate for conflict resolution. Although partnerships work on the basis of shared objectives, sometimes partners act in ways that are considered as inappropriate by other partners.

Question 3: What further issues might need attention to translate these findings from catchments to other landscape partnerships?

This discussion group included 7 participants working in academia, Scottish Government, a conservation NGO, and a Scottish government agency. Most though not all had extensive experience with partnership working. The discussion included:

- Similar issues and insights can apply to other types of partnerships. However, it may be more difficult to bound them to a particular scale and shared objective, so initiating a non-catchment partnership may be more challenging.
- A shared problem to be addressed, or a shared identity, is usually needed as the basis of a partnership. For new Regional Land Use Partnerships, which are not identity or problem-driven, the possibility to influence future funding may be an important driver.
- Private landownership can be an important driver, where similar landowners can come together as a partnership. However, this may be difficult in Scotland due to the diversity of landowners.
- The preceding presentation noted the partnerships generally work *for* but not extensively *with* local communities. This is surprising. Engaging private land managers and other private interests can be challenging but is vital to secure lasting outcomes from partnerships that link to land management.
- When considering new Regional Land Use Partnerships (or other partnerships), it is best to keep it simple by initially focussing on one topic. However, it is important to learn and be adaptive. A skilled and neutral facilitator is crucial for this.
- Unlike the results presented, some partnerships can be very good at demonstrating their procedural outcomes, and not so good at demonstrating tangible outcomes.
- Other partnership models such as Local Enterprise Partnerships in England can be effective in delivering outcomes, they are focussed on business and available funding.

Question 4: What non-catchment partnerships or initiatives might be interested in discussing these insights?

This group comprised 7 participants working in academia, Scottish Government agencies, an environmental NGO, and Scottish Government. The work presented is relevant for partnerships operating at different scales, including:

- The Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest, particularly regarding its experience with multifunctional land-use agreements. While aiming for integrated land-use to achieve multiple benefits, agreements with individual landowners can result in partitioned outcomes.
- The Scottish GWCT Farming Cluster and their demonstration farms, which work together but are not spatially contiguous. More funding would allow for improved coordination at scale, and to broaden the context beyond Natural Flood Management. Funding is also needed to support the key role of a partnership facilitator.
- Regional Land Use Partnerships. The Scottish Land Use Strategy must support improved partnership working if goals are to be realised.
- Build on the National Planning Framework 4 and existing National Nature Networks.

Other topics that were mentioned in this group were:

- the need for public incentives to link more strongly to post-CAP agricultural and land-use payments.
- The critical need for land-use partnerships to increase their attractiveness to corporate investment.
- The need for the Scottish Land Use Strategy to further support partnership working.

- Enterprise Agencies and community development initiatives could be valuable links to communities.
- Partnerships that operate at large geographical scales often only engage and benefit a small group of stakeholders, in which case smaller, more focussed, partnerships may be more appropriate.

Next Steps

These insights will be used, along with feedback from further knowledge exchange activities, to inform future research regarding how public-private partnerships can be effectively implemented in other settings, beyond existing catchment partnerships.

For further information, or if you would like to discuss how we might work with **your** partnership, please contact: Kirsty.Blackstock@hutton.ac.uk or Kerry. Waylen@hutton.ac.uk.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all the participants who attended the workshop. This research is funded by the Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme 2016-2021 (RD 1.2.4 & 1.4.2).

