

RESAS RD 3.4.2: Place-based policy and rural Scotland

Objective 5.1

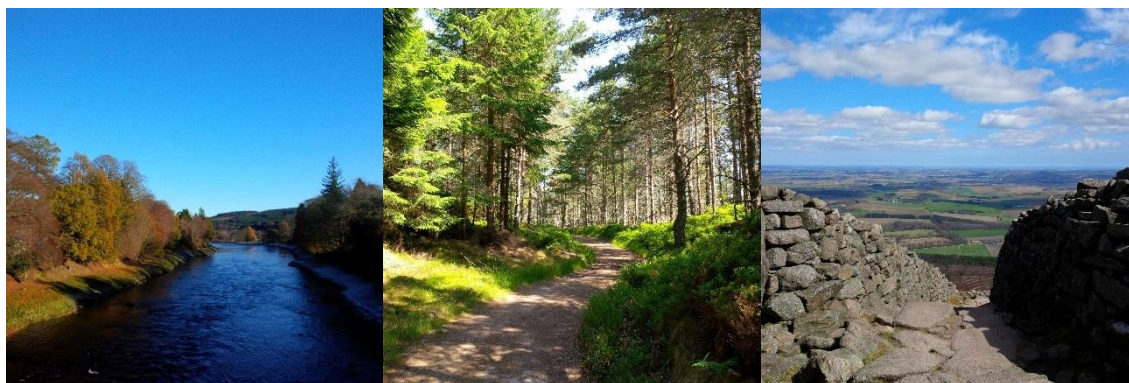
December 2018 (updated: February 2019)

# What is place-based rural policy and what evidence base does it need? Research and knowledge exchange activities

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## 1. Purpose of document

This report summarises some of the activities which have taken place within Objective 5 of a research project on place-based policy and service delivery in rural Scotland (RD3.4.2: 'Place-based policy and its implications for policy and service delivery' of the 2016-2021 Strategic Research Programme). Several of these activities have been primarily knowledge exchange activities, aiming to increase wider awareness of debates about place-based policy and encourage stakeholder discussion. This report also outlines the context to the work in Objective 5.

## 2. The context: research into place-based policy and rural Scotland since 2016

Researchers based at the James Hutton Institute and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) have been undertaking research into place-based policy in Scotland, as part of a larger 'work package' on Communities and Wellbeing within the Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme. At its outset, the research aim was to "...improve our current understanding of (i) the main reasons for differences in economic performance and social outcomes across rural areas and small towns of Scotland, and (ii) how policies can help to deliver positive outcomes and address these disparities"<sup>1</sup>. This research has taken place during a period of considerable economic and political change and uncertainty, driven by the Brexit process following the EU membership referendum in 2016, and austerity. Additionally, parts of rural Scotland are affected by major 'place-specific' issues such as poor communication and transport links, highly concentrated land ownership, and declining populations. In Scotland, an increased emphasis on 'place-based' policies has been partly driven by the challenges faced by public services (limited finance and increasing demand), and partly due to the recognised benefits that such an approach can offer, in terms of "...the potential to tackle cross-cutting issues through an integrated and joined-up approach across geographic and organisational boundaries and to develop the most appropriate responses, based on bottom-up endogenous knowledge, resources, etc. and putting communities at the heart of activities"<sup>2</sup>.

Earlier research in this project assessed international definitions and characteristics of place-based policies, and identified potential implications for rural Scotland. This review recognised that the term 'place-based approach' is poorly defined, but Scottish examples are marked by: a) partnership working across public, third and private sectors to provide services; b) community- or neighbourhood-level actions, tailored to these areas and focused on prevention and early intervention; c) viewing people as assets, and building on local assets more broadly; d) partnership-driven, holistic working; and e) a transition in the role of the public sector to the facilitation rather than delivery of services<sup>3</sup>. A further discussion paper, placing Scottish rural development policy in the context of Brexit, made several recommendations, including supporting neo-endogenous or networked development, using both local and extra-local assets and networks; emphasising the

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<sup>1</sup> Cited from Theme 3 – Food, Health and Wellbeing Tender Document: page 209. Available at <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00498654.pdf> (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Sourced/cited from page 3 of Atterton, J. (2017) Place-based policy approaches and Rural Scotland, Working Paper from RESAS Research Deliverable 3.4.2 Place-based policy and its implications for policy and service delivery (July). Available at [https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3808/342\\_place-based\\_policy\\_approaches\\_and\\_rural\\_scotland.pdf](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3808/342_place-based_policy_approaches_and_rural_scotland.pdf) (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from pages 15-16 of Atterton (2017)

importance of a detailed evidence base to inform policy; and a focus on the principles of place-based policy<sup>4</sup>.

Other outputs in this work have contributed to a greater understanding of the relationships between urban areas and small towns (Objective 2). A review of the form of international definitions of rural and urban areas, and selected typologies, was undertaken; this also emphasised the importance of urban accessibility to socio-economic performance in Scotland. This review also provided support for definitions and typologies which identify urban-rural integration, or assets which are relevant to rural development; this being of benefit to place-based policies and a greater understanding of rural diversity<sup>5</sup>. An accompanying assessment of the implications of policies focusing on urban-rural interaction on rural development (such as City Deals in England, and City Region Deals in Scotland) highlighted several sets of issues, including the exclusion of remoter areas and concluded that “...the potential benefits for rural Scotland remain largely untapped”<sup>6</sup>.

The quality of the quantitative ‘evidence base’ which exists in Scotland has been evaluated through a detailed inventory and assessment of the small area data sources which can be used for measuring diverse aspects of wellbeing in Scotland, followed by the identification of suitable indicators via a quality assessment, and a spatial and regional analysis of differences in wellbeing across Scotland (Objective 3)<sup>7</sup>. This work is crucial given the importance of a fine-grained, high quality ‘evidence base’ to inform place-based policies<sup>8</sup>. It identified areas of data richness and subjects with data ‘gaps’, and revealed evidence of considerable inequality, and very different regional ‘strengths’ across the country.

The ‘evidence base’ research in Objective 3, including its inventory of small area-resolution datasets, and resulting indicators, provide a key resource for the work in Objective 5. The report from the Objective 3 work recommended that “...indicator selection is a process which should involve input from policymakers, researchers and practitioners with experience and expertise in issues affecting small towns and rural areas across Scotland” and “...if governments (and other organisations) wish to create or analyse strong ‘performance indicators’ for types of socio-economic outcomes and wellbeing, and analyse these at the level of small geographical areas (possibly in the context of place-based policies), then careful consideration should take place over... which aspects or

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<sup>4</sup> Sourced from pages 4-5 and 25-32 of Atterton, J. (2018) The Future of Rural Development Policy in Scotland, Working Paper from RESAS Research Deliverable 3.4.2 Place-based policy and its implications for policy and service delivery (August). Available at [https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3811/342\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_rural\\_policy\\_in\\_scotland.pdf](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3811/342_the_future_of_rural_policy_in_scotland.pdf) (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>5</sup> Hopkins, J. and Copus, A. (2018) Definitions, measurement approaches and typologies of rural areas and small towns: a review. Available at [https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3810/342\\_definitions\\_measurement\\_approaches\\_and\\_typologies\\_of\\_rural\\_areas\\_and\\_small\\_towns\\_a\\_review.pdf](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3810/342_definitions_measurement_approaches_and_typologies_of_rural_areas_and_small_towns_a_review.pdf) (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>6</sup> Copus, A. (2018) Inter-dependencies between Rural Areas, Small Towns and Urban Areas: What could be the Benefits to Rural Areas from Scotland’s City Region Deals? Available at [https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3809/342\\_inter-dependencies\\_between\\_rural\\_areas\\_small\\_towns\\_and\\_urban\\_areas.pdf](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3809/342_inter-dependencies_between_rural_areas_small_towns_and_urban_areas.pdf) (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>7</sup> Hopkins, J. and Copus, A. (2018) Identifying suitable measures of socio-economic outcomes and mapping geographical disparities in Scotland. Available at [https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3872/report\\_rd\\_342\\_september\\_2018.pdf](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3872/report_rd_342_september_2018.pdf) (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>8</sup> See Atterton (2017): 3 and Atterton (2018): 26

‘dimensions’ of socio-economic performance and wellbeing are most important”<sup>9</sup>. The main aim of Objective 5 is to draw on the diverse data identified in the work described above, and to create a useful, informative, interactive resource to enable access to a high-quality, detailed ‘evidence base’ for practitioners and diverse stakeholders engaged in place-based policies and initiatives. The aims of the current work in this objective are to define:

- What stakeholders perceive to be the most important issues and subjects which affect Scotland’s rural areas and small towns, and whether data is available to measure them at the local level.
- How stakeholders use and analyse data about places and people, and how existing online resources for viewing and accessing data and maps can be improved.

### 3. Summary of activities

At present, work in Objective 5 is progressing within two deliverables: O5.1 and O5.3i, which are very closely linked. Broadly, work in O5.1 (described in this report) has consisted of stakeholder engagement at a policy workshop held at the Scottish Rural Parliament 2018 (held in Stranraer in November 2018), and (just before the Rural Parliament) the publication of two blog entries at the SEFARI blog<sup>10</sup>, a key knowledge exchange outlet for the collective of Main Research Providers in Scotland. The blogs helped to publicise the Rural Parliament workshop. A third blog entry was published at the James Hutton Institute’s SEGS blog in January 2019<sup>11</sup> to reflect on this workshop, including the main discussion themes and the issues they raise for social researchers and place-based research. In addition, on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018, a workshop was held with a range of Scottish Government staff at Saughton House. The workshop started with a presentation on place-based policy and the work being undertaken in this project to increase awareness of the work being undertaken and a discussion followed, first about the relevance of the work across a range of policy domains and second, to help inform our case study selection later in the project, and to ensure that this is mindful of other place-based policy work going on across Scottish Government.

The two blog entries published before the Rural Parliament workshop provided a readable summary of key discussions and debates: firstly, what ‘true’ place-based rural policies mean in Scotland (contrasting territorial governance and institution-driven policies, and ‘bottom up’ community development)<sup>12</sup>; and secondly, whether the evidence base in Scotland is sufficient for place-based policies<sup>13</sup>. The second of the two blogs described the large volume of socio-economic data available in Scotland, but also the potential size of the ‘evidence base’ resulting from the numerous topics affecting people and wellbeing, and the requirement for small area-level and high quality, relevant data. This blog noted some insights on data availability from the ‘evidence base’ research in

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<sup>9</sup> Hopkins and Copus (2018): 64, 63

<sup>10</sup> See <https://sefari.scot/blog> (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>11</sup> Wilson, R. (2019) Big data, small places: building a better evidence base. Available at <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/blogs/segs/big-data-small-places-building-better-evidence-base> (Accessed 15th February 2019)

<sup>12</sup> Copus, A. and Atterton, J. (2018) What Exactly is Place Based Rural Policy? Available at <https://sefari.scot/blog/2018/11/08/what-exactly-is-place-based-rural-policy> (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>13</sup> Hopkins, J. (2018) Do we have the evidence to support place based policies? Available at <https://sefari.scot/blog/2018/11/13/do-we-have-the-evidence-to-support-place-based-policies> (Accessed 10th December 2018)

Objective 3 (outlined in Section 2 above): "...for several important aspects of life (including civic engagement, life satisfaction, and the environment), little or no 'fine-grained' data is available". The blog closed by emphasising the importance of learning from stakeholder views in upcoming research:

"There is a clear need for researchers to consult practitioners, policy makers, community groups and several other stakeholders to identify the most important issues and subjects which affect Scotland's rural areas and small towns, and to assess whether relevant small-area data are available to measure them. In addition to identifying priority topics and data gaps, it is also crucial for those who produce data and information to make it available in a format which is useful to the people and groups who need it. Therefore, we need to learn from others about how data should be published and presented for best effect, how 'end users' prefer to use and analyse data, and the types of resources and 'tools' which would best meet their requirements. If you're at the Rural Parliament, and are interested in this subject, please come along to our workshop."

The Scottish Rural Parliament has been held in 2014, 2016 and 2018: it was created following successful similar events in Europe, and is described as "...probably the largest gathering of rural activists in Scotland"<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, the 2018 event was attended by 400 people and was described as "...Scotland's largest participatory democratic event"; the organisers of the event, Scottish Rural Action, state that it "...brings representatives of rural communities from across Scotland together with decision-makers. The event aims to raise the profile of rural needs and strengths, as well as identifying solutions to the challenges our communities face"<sup>15</sup>. These aims overlapped closely with the themes of research on place-based policy, and the diversity of attendees and subjects of discussions meant that the Rural Parliament formed a natural 'home' for the workshop.

The workshop, lasting one hour, was held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November and was one of several parallel workshops held "...examining key aspects of rural policy": it was open to all attending the Rural Parliament, and was held twice. It was entitled "What is place-based rural policy, and what evidence base does it need?", and was advertised with the following description<sup>16</sup>:

"Think about the town, village or rural place where you live, and the issues which matter there. Can you find the data to measure them? Join our discussion of what 'true' place-based policy means for rural Scotland and help us collect information on the evidence base it needs."

21 people attended the first run of the workshop (13:30), and 12 attended the second (14:50). The format of the workshop was as follows:

- A short, accessible presentation (copies of slides are shown in Appendix 1) was given to attendees on the subject matter of the two blogs described above, introducing firstly the concept of place-based policy, its rural implications, and the debate over what 'true' place-based policies mean. Secondly, the key issue related to the 'evidence base' and data availability was described.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk/about-us/> (Accessed 10th December 2018)

<sup>15</sup> Two citations from <https://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk/srp2018/> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018)

<sup>16</sup> Description and quote above cited from the Scottish Rural Parliament programme, available at <https://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SRP2018-Draft-programme-1.pdf> (Accessed 13th December 2018)



- Attendees were informed that a public online survey would be launched soon, aimed at people from several organisations with experience of using data: this slide also showed where the survey would be publicised (The James Hutton Institute website and Twitter accounts).
- Attendees were asked whether they would like to join a facilitated smaller group discussion on one of two themes:
  1. Place-based policy – what does it mean to you?
  2. Do you have the evidence you require to inform and understand place based policy?
- Attendees moved into groups for these discussions (the number of groups depended on the number of people at the workshop). Facilitators helped to guide discussion based on sub-questions, or key points: attendees used post-it notes to record important issues affecting their local area, which were then ‘clustered’ within groups. The sub-questions used to guide discussion were:
  1. Place-based policy – what does it mean to you?: Can you give some examples of place based policy from your local area/experience? What do you understand by the term place based policy? Do you agree that there is a separation between bottom-up community development activities and community planning? If so, what are the implications of this?
  2. Do you have the evidence you require to inform and understand place based policy?: What are the most important issues which affect your local area? Is relevant data available to measure these for your local area? What do you need to help you use and analyse data more effectively?
- After a short feedback of key points from discussions, attendees were thanked for attendance, reminded of the online survey, and informed of where the findings would be published.

One of the aims of the workshop was to encourage stakeholder discussion about place-based policy, and the status of the ‘evidence base’ related to important local issues. It also helped to raise awareness of the research project, and workshop attendees were invited to contribute to online data collection on key rural issues, local-level data availability, and methods for data use and analysis (described in Section 4: ‘Ongoing work and summary’).

Personal reflections on the workshop discussions have been also described in a blog entry<sup>17</sup>. This notes that ‘problems of place-based data’ can occur even if data which is relevant to local issues is available. Data may not be spatially detailed enough, may contradict personal observations of a local area, or may not be relevant to ‘the right questions’ (or be too simplistic). This blog describes the link between access to good quality data and community empowerment, implications for social researchers working in rural areas, and provides recommendations for place-based research.

#### **4. Ongoing work and summary**

As summarised above, current activities in this research project aim to build on the identification of quantitative small area wellbeing indicators in earlier work, by gathering stakeholder insights and

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<sup>17</sup> This blog (see footnote 11) was published at the Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences Blog (<https://www.hutton.ac.uk/blogs/segs>) in January 2019.

expertise of priority issues in Scotland's rural areas and small towns, the availability of local-level data for these, the ways that stakeholders use and analyse socio-economic data, and ways in which online resources for viewing and accessing data and maps can be improved. The research described in this report contributes to this, but this was extended via a publicly available online survey, able to reach a much larger number of stakeholders than who could attend a workshop on a single day. The survey results will be reported in 2019 (Objective 5.3i)<sup>18</sup>.

As noted in Section 3, the online survey was publicised at the workshop events at the Rural Parliament on the 15<sup>th</sup> November. The survey was designed at the same time as the blog writing and workshop planning and delivery outlined in this report. Following question design, the online survey was produced at The James Hutton Institute's 'Online Surveys' facility<sup>19</sup>. The survey (titled "Place-based policy and rural Scotland: evidence base survey") was released publicly on the 21<sup>st</sup> November<sup>20</sup>. Following the first page (including an information sheet, privacy notice, and consent form) is a short questionnaire, aimed at stakeholders with experience of using data. A detailed description of the survey questions will be included alongside the survey results in 2019. In brief, the questionnaire collects data on a) the types of organisations that respondents are affiliated with; b) experience of data use and analysis; c) perceptions of the most important local issues, and associated availability of relevant local-level data, and d) suggested improvements to online resources used for data activities.

As of the 19<sup>th</sup> December, the survey has been publicised online and through social media:

- A news item "Views sought on local issues and quality of life in Scottish communities"<sup>21</sup> at The James Hutton Institute website (published: 29<sup>th</sup> November)
- A news item "Views from rural communities sought"<sup>22</sup> at the Scottish Rural Network website (published: 4<sup>th</sup> December)
- Twitter: The James Hutton Institute (@JamesHuttonInst), Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences group at the James Hutton Institute (@HuttonSEGS), the Rural Policy Centre at SRUC (@RuralPolicySRUC), Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutes (@SEFARIScot)

Initially, it was intended to close the survey in December 2018. However, with the possibility of further publicity in early 2019, the researchers will delay this to January 2019, providing a two month data collection period, and an opportunity for an increased number of responses. Insights from the survey results will be produced (Objective 5.3i), and these may contribute to the design, content and functions of an online tool produced later in the year (Objective 5.3ii).

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<sup>18</sup> At the time that this report was updated (February 2019), the survey data collection has completed and data analysis has begun. However, Section 4 of this report has not been updated: revised details will be included with the survey results (to be published by the end of March 2019)

<sup>19</sup> See <http://surveys.hutton.ac.uk/> (Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018). This survey was produced using LimeSurvey software (<https://www.limesurvey.org/>)

<sup>20</sup> <http://surveys.hutton.ac.uk/index.php/433557?lang=en>

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/news/views-sought-local-issues-and-quality-life-scottish-communities> (Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018)

<sup>22</sup> See <https://www.ruralnetwork.scot/news-and-events/news/views-rural-communities-sought> (Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018)



To summarise, the compilation and assessment of stakeholder views in this part of the project will add value to the earlier data-driven (or data availability-driven) assessment of small area datasets and identification indicators, as well as the geographical review of ways of measuring rural and urban areas, and detailed policy analysis. The questionnaire analysis is likely to assist in future prioritisation of small area indicators, and in the design and content of an online tool, providing improved access to small area data for a range of end users in the public, private and third sectors. This report forms a short overview of early work which has begun the process of discussion and stakeholder consultation, which has included three blogs, a workshop at a major rural event, and a presentation.

## Appendix 1: Scottish Rural Parliament workshop presentation

The following slides were shown to attendees at the Scottish Rural Parliament workshops, at the start of the workshop (as described in Section 3). An animation (on the ninth slide) and slide notes are not shown.

**What is place based rural policy and what evidence base does it need?**

Jane Atterton (SRUC) and Jonathan Hopkins, Andrew Copus and Ruth Wilson (James Hutton Institute)

Scottish Rural Parliament, Stranraer, November 2018



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# What is place based policy?

## Some key principles:

- Participation
- Multi-level governance
- Tailoring
- Building on assets (not challenges/needs)
- Cross-sector integration
- Partnership-working



## What is the antithesis to place based policy?

- 'Spatially blind', 'place neutral' or 'horizontal'?
- Person-based?
- Sectoral 'silos'?
- Institutional/policy incoherence?
- Top-down or centralised?

## What are the implications for rural Scotland?

- Specific rural service delivery challenges
- Scale of place
- Evidence base
- Scope for bottom up community development, but capacity varies
- Chance to demonstrate rural opportunities and assets not just challenges and needs



## Separate arenas...?

- World-leading, 'bottom-up' integrated (community) development activity – often associated with owning/managing assets
- But the 'place based policy rhetoric' seems to be more focused on governance and institutional coordination (e.g. CPPs)

## Key principles for future rural policy in Scotland

- A more **positive** narrative
- A **networked** approach
- Need for an accurate, up-to-date **evidence** base
- An **integrated** approach
- Rethinking the value of **rural proofing**
- Taking a **place based** approach to policy
- Strengthening rural **communities**
- Recognising the **diversity and breadth** of activities in rural Scotland
- Placing **rural at the forefront** of opportunities and challenges
- Acknowledging and strengthening rural-town-urban **linkages**



## Accessing information about people and places in Scotland: have we never had it so good?

- OpenData
- Increased public rights to access data
- Many online resources and 'tools'
- Useful 'official' indicators (SIMD, Urban Rural Classification)

statistics.gov.scot  
 data.gov.uk  
 Nomis  
 Scotland's Census  
 SIMD indicators  
 Understanding Scottish Places  
 Inclusive Growth Diagnostic Tool

Should we assume that stakeholders can easily find data for their local area, about the issues that matter?

## However...

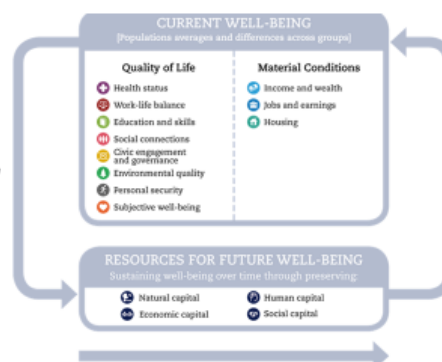
Place based policies – those focused on local areas, and tailored to their characteristics – require an evidence base which is:

- available for small areas (e.g. Data Zones: 6,976 in Scotland)
- up to date
- relevant to important issues and topics

**The size of the evidence base needed in Scotland could be very large, and could cover a broad range of issues.**

## Measuring wellbeing

- Scottish Government [National Performance Framework](#): **11 National Outcomes, 81 National Indicators** providing “...a broad measure of national wellbeing”
- OECD Framework for measuring well-being and progress: **11 dimensions of wellbeing**
- Issues perceived to be important could vary between places, and between groups of people.



OECD (2018) “Measuring Well-Being and Progress: Well-being Research”  
<http://www.oecd.org/statistics/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm>

## Our research

- identify small area data sources for measuring wellbeing
- quality assessment (availability, relevance, suitability), indicator creation
- analysis of spatial/regional differences

Several Data Zone-level datasets found for economic issues, housing, health, education, access to services.

For more 'subjective', perception-based topics (environmental and personal wellbeing): less data available, harder to measure



## Our research

- We will soon be launching a public survey “Place-based policy and rural Scotland: evidence base survey” online. This will be publicised at <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/> and  : @JamesHuttonInst, @HuttonSEGS, @RuralPolicySRUC
- Aimed at a range of people (from public, third and private sectors, and community organisations) with experience of using data.
- Today, we’d like to encourage discussion of place-based policy and whether we have the evidence we need.



## Workshop Discussion – Two key themes:

1. Place-based policy – what does it mean to you?
2. Do you have the evidence you require to inform and understand place based policy?

## Theme One: Place based policy – what does it mean to you?


- Can you give some examples of place based policy from your local area/experience?
- What do you understand by the term place based policy?
- Do you agree that there is a separation between bottom-up community development activities and community planning? If so, what are the implications of this?

## Theme Two: Do you have the evidence you require to inform and understand place based policy?

- What are the most important issues which affect your local area?
- Is relevant data available to measure these for your local area?
- What do you need to help you use and analyse data more effectively?

### Our next steps

Many thanks for attending the workshop today: we hope that you have found it interesting.

- Please look out for our survey: <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/> and  : @JamesHuttonInst, @HuttonSEGS, @RuralPolicySRUC
- The survey findings will be published online at our project webpage: [https://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120671/our\\_projects/1806/strategic\\_research\\_programme/3](https://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/120671/our_projects/1806/strategic_research_programme/3)

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## Thank you

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Views expressed are those of the researchers and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or RESAS.