

Land Use Benefits Workshop Report

Workshop held at Glen Lui Hotel, Ballater, 21st October 2013



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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

- The purpose of the workshop was to explore the benefits that the Upper Dee area currently provides, how this is linked to different kinds of land uses (i.e., farming, conservation, forestry and recreation), and what influences land use of the past, present and future.
- The workshop was an opportunity to explore a new approach to planning for the future; and a way for people 'on the ground' to input into the Land Use Strategy pilot process.
- 14 participants attended in total. The participants were: James Davidson (Aberdeenshire Council); Linda Mathieson (Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum); Richard Gledson (Balmoral Estate); Allan Adams (Eastfield Farm); Ian Cowe (Forestry Commission Scotland); Ian McKenzie (Glenmuick Estate); Nicki Hall (Historic Scotland); Simon Blackett (Invercauld Estate); Alison Espie (Local Outdoor Access Forum); Donald Thomas (North East Mountain Trust); David Winton (National Farmers Union Scotland); Stuart Jennings (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds); Pete Wright (Scottish Environment and Protection Agency) and Fiona Cruikshank (Scottish Natural Heritage).
- There were two main parts to the workshop. In the first exercise we asked participants to help us identify the benefits which different types of land use provide in the upper Dee area using large-scale ordinance survey maps of the region. In the second exercise we explored the reasons why particular land use choices were made and what factors affected these decisions through the creation of decision-making diagrams.
- The main findings of exercise one are:
 - That the multi-purpose nature of much of the land in Upper Deeside is of huge importance, along with the importance of the area for wider biodiversity goals. It is also a key area for tourism, with visitors coming from both the local area and further afield to obtain a variety of benefits from the land (e.g. to view castles, go hiking or skiing or to view rare species such as Wildcats or Caledonian Pines).
- The main findings of exercise two are:
 - That more than half of the participants considered the factors of *land capability*, *incentive schemes*, *markets*, *finances* and *skills and experience* to be very important factors for decision-making for their chosen land use. More than half of the participants did not consider the factors of age or peers to be relevant factors in their land use decision-making maps.
 - And in terms of common constraints and opportunities, the factors of *paperwork*, *tradition* and *public opinion* were considered to be constraining factors by more than half of the participants, whereas *markets* and *incentive schemes* were highlighted as opportunity factors by more than half of the participants.
- This information (and subsequent further analysis) will be fed back to Aberdeenshire Council and the wider Scottish Government to inform the Land Use Strategy review. Our next step is to hold a 'sister workshop' in another area of Aberdeenshire (Huntly) in January so that the information obtained from the two workshops can be compared.
- The Ballater workshop was the first in a series of three workshops in the area, the second will be held in spring 2014 and will look at identifying constraints and opportunities for land use change, and the third will aim to produce a framework for decision-making and will be held in late 2014.

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Introduction

The purpose of the workshop was to explore the benefits that the Upper Dee area currently provides and how this is linked to different kinds of land uses (i.e., farming, conservation, forestry and recreation), and what influences land use of the past, present and future. We are interested in the extent to which land use is determined by the preferences people have, the constraints they face or the policies and incentives that governments promote through the different agencies.

The workshop was an opportunity to explore a new approach to planning for the future; and a way for people 'on the ground' to input into the Land Use Strategy pilot process. As part of the national implementation of the Strategy the Scottish Government is running two pilots, one in the Scottish Borders and one in Aberdeenshire. One of the aims of the Land Use Strategy is to promote the delivery of multiple benefits from the land (such as food, timber, energy, landscapes, recreation and flood protection). James Hutton Institute staff ran two identical workshops on 21st October 2013, one in the afternoon and one in the evening at the Glen Lui hotel in Ballater.

There were two main parts to the workshop. In the first session we asked participants to help us identify the benefits which different types of land use provide in the Upper Dee area using large-scale ordinance survey maps of the region. In the second session we explored the reasons why particular land use choices were made, and what factors affect these decisions, through the creation of decision-making diagrams. More information regarding the two exercises can be found below.

Participants

The table below highlights the stakeholders who attended one of the workshops along with the organization, Estate, or Farm they were representing.

Organisation	Participant Name
Aberdeenshire Council	James Davidson
Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum	Linda Mathieson
Balmoral Estate	Richard Gledson
Eastfield Farm	Allan Adams
Forestry Commission Scotland	Ian Cowe
Glenmuick Estate	Ian McKenzie
Historic Scotland	Nicki Hall
Invercauld Estate	Simon Blackett
Local Outdoor Access Forum	Alison Espie
North East Mountain Trust	Donald Thomas
National Farmers Union Scotland	David Winton
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Stuart Jennings
Scottish Environment Protection Agency	Pete Wright
Scottish Natural Heritage	Fiona Cruickshank

Stakeholders whom we invited but could not attend included Cairngorms National Park Authority, Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, Scottish Land and Estates, other Estate owners/ managers, other local farmers, Strutt and Parker, Marr area partnership, Dee Catchment Partnership, Pearls in Peril, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Water, Local Community and history groups, and tourism groups such as Visit Scotland and Discover Royal Deeside. Reasons for these absences including conflicts with other meeting, people living far from the Ballater area and some stakeholders were overstretched and so could not also commit to a workshop (to combat this we will give people as much prior notice as we can and try to gauge interest before committing to a particular date). From the evaluation forms campsite owners and local archaeology groups were identified as other potential participants whom we had overlooked in inviting, and as a result we will invite for the next set of workshops.

As a sort of 'ice-breaker' participants were asked to bring along and give a short explanation of an object or image which illustrates a benefit which they felt the land provides. Through talking about these objects and images we were able to start untangling what is important to people in this part of Aberdeenshire, and how these values are linked to land use choices. These images/ objects consisted of a bottle of (local) water, a photo of an access rights sign, a miniature hard hat and brick, an image of an endangered species, and a number of images of participant's favourite views from the area (often Lochnagar). These 'favourite views' were the most common images presented, highlighting that the aesthetic qualities of the Upper Dee area are important for a wide range of people, including both those working and/ or living in the area, but often for different reasons.

Exercise One: Mapping Benefits arising from the Land

This exercise involved small groups (2 or 3 participants per group, along with a facilitator for a 1 hour session) identifying and marking the various benefits that the land provides (or enables the provision of) directly onto large ordinance survey maps, along with other potential benefits that they recognise the land could potentially provide.

The area of the upper Dee catchment area was chosen as it is considered an area rich in different land uses and types of ownerships. The specific area of Braemar to Dinnet from West to East, and Braemar to Loch Muick from North to South, was chosen as it was thought this size of area could encapsulate a variety of land uses and estates, along with the sizeable town of Ballater, and was also considered to be of an appropriate size for local people's knowledge.

Various approaches were used by the groups, some groups wrote directly on the map, others wrote on post it notes, whilst others simply spoke and let the facilitators record the information, and often a mixture of all three methods were used. Some groups looked at the map area by area, identifying as many benefits as they could for one area before moving onto the next, whilst others considered the map in more general terms to identify the benefits for the Upper Dee as a whole, often without identifying specific locations. The picture overleaf shows one of the groups (working with a facilitator) highlighting the benefits by recording their suggestions directly onto the map themselves.

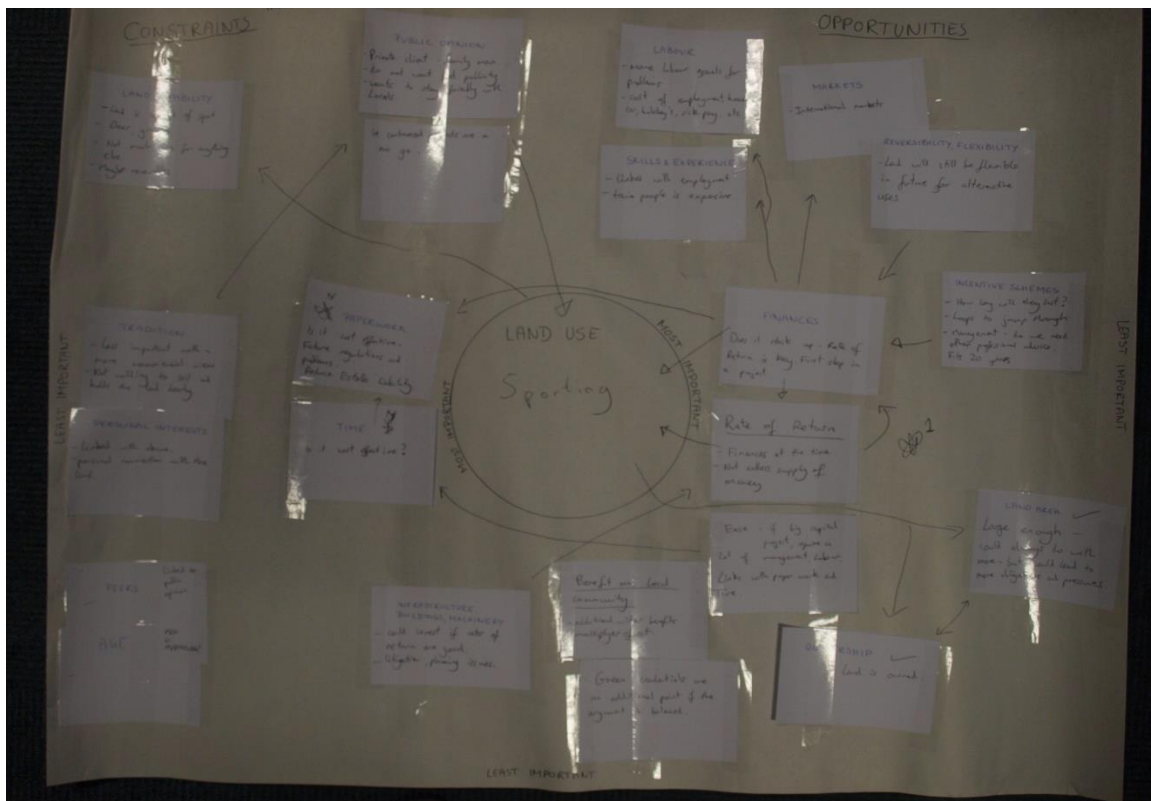


The exercise began with the facilitators (all from the James Hutton Institute) drawing the study area boundary on the map, containing the Upper Dee Catchment and aligning with the Cairngorms National Park boundary. Early analysis of this map work has highlighted the multi-purpose nature of much of the land in Upper Deeside, along with the importance of the area for wider biodiversity goals. It is an important area for tourism with visitors coming from both the local and further afield areas to obtain a variety of benefits from the land (e.g. to view castles, hiking, skiing, to view rare species such as Capercaillie, Wildcats or Caledonian Pines). Tourism brings money to the area which has been used both for employment and self-employment such as a local Distillery. These benefits obtained from the land such as drinking water and recreation activities such as shooting and fishing can be enjoyed by both locals and non-locals. Other benefits from the land include farming (mostly tenant farmers, and not as many as we had first envisaged, given that much of the land is owned by Estates and kept aside for country sports), which provide benefits such as food and other animal products, and employment. The general biodiversity that exists in the area is important for carbon storage and habitat management for the numerous rare species in the area (such as those mentioned above).

The area is fairly unique in terms of ownership as much of land is owned by sizeable estates, in some cases by private landlords and others by organisations such as the RSPB. Income from forestry is often important; however estate owners often obtain much of their income from sporting interests. However country sports are a traditional land use for the area and it was mentioned by more than one group that it is much better than agriculture in terms of access. Country sports are one of the largest land uses within the area, and no doubt one of best in terms of economic value. However many participants highlighted that the existence value of the area, e.g. the sense of identity that both locals and non-locals get from the Cairngorms and Deeside is perhaps the most important benefit even though it cannot easily be marked on a map. The picture on the next page provides an example one of the small groups working through the mapping exercise.

Exercise Two: Understanding Land Use Decision-Making

The second exercise was devised to help both those participating in and those running the workshops to obtain a better understanding of land use decision-making. To do this the participants were given a standard set of cards with decision-making factors on them, such as *skills and experience*, *finances*, *personal interests*, along with a number of blank cards (where they could record other factors that felt were important in influencing a particular land use decision). The participants were asked to choose a land use (possibly, but not necessarily, one they were already involved in) and record it in the middle of their empty decision-making map, and then to place the factors on the map where they felt they were most relevant. Factors that were 'most important' were placed in the middle of the map and factors of 'least importance' were placed at the edge of the map. Factors that were considered to be opportunities were placed on the right side, and factors that were constraints were placed on the left-hand side. Participants were encouraged to write further explanations on the cards, to fill in the blank cards and to connect the different factors with arrows. The unused cards were placed in a corner of a map as often they provided as good an insight into land use decision-making as the used cards did. The picture below shows an example of one the maps.



The participants created decision-making maps on livestock farming (3 versions), the provision of facilities for recreation/ tourism (2), country sports (3), forestry (2), conservation (2), and one participant created a map on renewable energy. However it should be noted that the forestry and conservation maps had a lot of similarities.

Early analysis shows that the *capability of the land*, and *skills and experience*, are very important factors for all the participants who made livestock farming maps, and *labour* and public opinion were considered to be of lesser or no importance in the same maps. Looking at the maps in terms of similar opportunities and constraints, *paperwork* and *ownership* were considered to be constraining factors on all three livestock farming maps, and *skills and experience* was the only factor consistently considered to be an opportunity on the same three maps. There appears to be a great deal of inconsistencies in the livestock farming maps with little common ground on what is considered a constraint or an opportunity (perhaps this is down to some of the maps being produced by actual farmers, whilst others were looking at farming from a purely hypothetical view). For the provision of tourism/ recreation facilities maps, *tradition* and *personal interests* were considered to be very important in both cases, and *peers* were thought to be irrelevant for both. In terms of finding common ground with the constraints and opportunities, both maps highlight *finances* and *paperwork* as constraining factors and *incentive schemes* and *personal interests* as opportunities. There are again a number of differences, such as one map showing *skills and experience* as a constraint and the other as an opportunity. For the three country sports maps there appear to be very few similarities across all of the maps. *Public opinion* has been considered a constraining factor for all three, and similarly *labour* has been considered as an opportunity on all three maps, but these are the only factors that are constant (and in the same place) across all three maps. Other issues such as *ownership* and *finances* have been considered to be very important factors on two of the maps, and the factors of *age* and *peers* were unused by two of the participants. Interestingly the country sports maps made use of all (or almost all) of the cards as well as adding extra factors, highlighting that a wide range of factors are involved in land use decisions concerning country sports.

For the two forestry maps *markets* and *ownership* were designated as very important factors for both. There were no similarities with unused cards as one participant made use of all cards. Similar constraining factors were *infrastructure*, *tradition*, *public opinion* and *peers*, and similar opportunities were *markets*, and *incentive schemes*. Interestingly *land area*, *reversibility* and *flexibility*, *finances*, and *personal interests* were considered to be opportunities on one map and constraints on the other. This may be because the two maps were looking at different types of forestry (multi-purpose and commercial forestry). More specifically the multi-purpose forestry map considered *reversibility and flexibility*, and *finances* to be constraining factors, whereas *personal interests* were thought of as an opportunity. On the other hand the commercial farming map considered *reversibility and flexibility*, and *finances* to be opportunistic factors whilst *personal interests* were thought of as a constraint.

For the two conservation maps, both maps highlight *finances*, and *incentive schemes*, as very important factors, whereas *labour* is a common irrelevant (unused) card. The only similar constraint, or opportunity, is *public opinion* which is considered to be a constraining factor on both maps. A number of factors are considered to be a constraint on one map and an opportunity on the other such as *land area*, *tradition*, and *ownership*. In fact there are a lot of differences when comparing these two maps, perhaps due to the participants coming from separate agencies with different (and sometimes conflicting) strategies. However, hopefully the fact that there are a few similarities can serve as a platform for better coordination in the future.

Finally the single renewable energy map (wind and hydro-energy in Deeside specifically) highlights that factors such as *ownership*, *public opinion* and *land capability* are very important, whilst *age*, *skills and experience*, and *labour* are of no relevance. Constraints included the long application process for renewable developments (*time*) and *peers* (particularly on Royal Deeside). Opportunities on the other hand included *markets* and *incentive schemes*.

Looking at the maps as a whole, more than half of the participants considered the factors of *land capability*, *incentive schemes*, *markets*, *finances* and *skills and experience* to be very important factors for decision-making for their chosen land use. More than half of the participants did not consider *age*, or *peers*, to be relevant factors in their land use decision-making maps. Finally in terms of common constraints and opportunities, the factors of *paperwork*, *tradition* and *public opinion* were considered to be constraining factors on more than half of the maps, whereas *markets* and *incentive schemes* were highlighted as opportunity factors on more than half of the maps.

Further and more detailed analysis of both the ordinance survey maps and decision-making maps will be carried out shortly, and the results will help to inform the next steps of the Rural Land Use Pilot and Land Use Strategy.

Next Steps

The James Hutton Institute is involved, with Aberdeenshire Council, in the Regional Land Use Pilot (RLUP), the aim of which is to test and evaluate how the Land Use Strategy can be used to guide decision-making to optimise land use and deal with competing or conflicting uses of land. One of the roles of the James Hutton Institute within this is to gather stakeholders' perspectives on current and future land use, to identify the factors influencing land use changes and decisions to obtain a better understanding of the benefits that the land provides. This information will be fed back to Aberdeenshire Council and the wider Scottish Government to inform the Land Use Strategy review. Our next step is to hold a 'sister workshop' in another area of Aberdeenshire (Huntly) in January 2014 so that the information obtained from the two workshops can be compared. The Ballater workshop was the first in a series of three workshops to be held in the area, the second will be held in spring 2014 and will look at identifying constraints and opportunities for land use change (in greater depth than the second exercise at the 21st October workshop), and the third will aim to produce a framework for decision-making and will be held in late 2014. We hope that many of the participants from this first workshop would be keen to attend the further workshops, along with other stakeholders who were unable to attend this workshop and also further stakeholders identified by the participants in the evaluation forms.

Since the 21st October workshops we have been analysing the information provided by the participants. We have fed back the main benefits and land use conflicts identified from the workshop to the RLUP team for use at their stakeholder meeting on 7th November. Further information on the workshop analysis will be available in due, however if you would like any information in the meantime please contact Anja Byg on 01224 395411 or Anja.byg@hutton.ac.uk.

We may also, if the participants oblige, be in contact with them for more individual information in the future.

Workshop Feedback

Through the completion of feedback forms it is clear that the majority of participants found the workshops to be either 'Useful' or 'Very Useful'. Unfortunately a couple of participants highlighted that they did not find the workshop very relevant to their work or lifestyle, an issue which we hope to address for the future workshops in the series. A number of participants highlighted that the workshops increased their knowledge on the land use strategy and the variety of land use policies, and other emphasised the diverse range of individuals and organisations involved in land use decision-making in the Upper Deeside area. We will continue to emphasise these points at the future workshops. Suggestions made by participants regarding who else to invite have been taken on board and will, again, be applied to the future workshops.

Some concern was raised by participants in relation to the lack of immediate feedback from the exercises, as participants were not always clear on why they were being asked to do the various tasks. This problem will be rectified in the future workshops by giving clearer instructions as to the purpose of the tasks, along with shuffling the timetable to allow for further discussion and more immediate feedback e.g. during the coffee break.