



The James
Hutton
Institute



The Scottish
Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Land Use Benefits Workshop Report

Workshop held at Linden Centre, Huntly, 20th January 2014



Bushnell

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Corn buntings need our
help to **survive**.

Turn over to find out
what **you** can do...

Report prepared by Rachel Creaney, Anja Byg, Justin Irvine and Kirsty Blackstock

Executive Summary

- The purpose of the workshop was to explore the benefits that people in the Huntly area derive from the way land is currently used (i.e., farming, conservation, forestry and recreation), and to explore what factors influence the decisions people make over what land is used for. This workshop is one of a series that sets out to explore how land use decisions can take into account the wide range of benefits the environment provides to society. Insights gained from this research will allow local knowledge to feed into the development of Scotland's Land Use Strategy through the Regional Land Use Pilot being conducted in Aberdeenshire.
- 28 local people from across the focus area attended the workshop. There were two main parts to the workshop. In the first exercise we asked participants to identify the benefits that different types of land use provide in the Huntly area using large 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.
- Provisional analysis of the benefits mapping has illustrated two findings: i) That agriculture and forestry are the predominant land-uses in the area and discussions indicated that there can be conflict between these two land uses affecting the benefits they provide. Agriculture is important for the provision of food; contribution to the character of the landscape and for jobs, both directly for farmers and indirectly to the economy of the market town of Huntly. Forestry is important for biodiversity (although this idea was questioned by some participants) as well as for fuel, recreation and timber. Other land uses include conservation, heritage and cultural activities. ii) That a number of these benefits could be provided on the same land area simultaneously e.g. forestry and recreation. Participants responded to the exercise by talking about the study area as a whole and in more general terms, rather than in reference to specific points on the map. This highlights that people see the landscape as being interlinked with the different land uses which, in combination, contribute to the identity of the area. Changes in the land use configuration in specific areas can therefore have a knock-on effect for the wider area. The participants often spoke about difficult-to-map benefits such as *sense of community* and *nice surroundings* which are a product of the whole study area and a range of different land uses and benefits.
- Provisional analysis of the decision-making exercise highlights that *infrastructure, buildings and machinery* is a common constraint for land use decision-making in the Huntly area, irrespective of the 'type' of decision. Conversely, *incentive schemes* are commonly seen as an opportunity. In addition, factors such as *ownership* and *personal interests* were frequently cited as generally being very important in the participants' decision-making. This early analysis highlights similarities in the factors that affect the land use choices people make, demonstrating the scope for better integration of decision-making in situations where there are 'competing' land uses.
- This information (and subsequent further analysis) will be fed back to Aberdeenshire Council and the Scottish Government Land Use Policy team to inform the review of the Land Use Strategy. Our next steps will be to conduct further analysis of the data obtained from both this initial Huntly workshop along with data from a similar workshop held in the Upper Dee area to compare and contrast the benefits and land use decisions that feature in these two contrasting local focus areas.
- The research was undertaken using funding from the Ecosystem Services Theme of the Scottish Government Environmental Change Programme 2011-2016. The specific research was not directly commissioned or endorsed by Scottish Government.

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Introduction

This workshop is the first of three planned for this area which sets out to explore how an ecosystem approach to land use decision-making can be achieved at a local scale. A fundamental principle of the Ecosystem Approach is that decision-making should be devolved to the scale appropriate to the people who are affected by the decision. The purpose of the workshop was to explore with local stakeholders in the Huntly area the different ways in which land is used (i.e., farming, conservation, forestry and recreation), and the benefits that these land uses currently provide to society. In addition, the workshop set out to explore the factors that influence the decisions and preferences people have over the way land is used and the benefits it provides.

The insights from this workshop will feed into the development of Scotland's Land Use Strategy through the Regional Land Use Pilot which is currently being conducted in Aberdeenshire. 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). This workshop is part of a sequence of activities that are designed elicit a local evaluation of how the multiple benefits that land provides to society can be managed in a more sustainable and integrated way.

The James Hutton Institute ran two identical workshops on 20th January 2014, one in the afternoon and one in the evening, at the Linden Centre in Huntly. The workshop focused on an area defined by a set of sub-catchments of the rivers Bogie and Deveron upstream and downstream of Huntly. These contain a variety of different land uses and types of land ownership. 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 Huntly 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

There were 28 participants in total, along with 4 facilitators from the James Hutton Institute. For more information on the participants, along with information on the people/ organisations we invited but could not attend please see figure 5 in the appendix. Reasons for these absences included conflicts with other meetings, that they lived too far from the Huntly area and some stakeholders were overstretched and so could not also commit to an additional workshop, however on a positive note the turnout was double that of our initial Ballater workshop. Those who were invited but were unable to attend will also be sent the report and will have the opportunity to attend subsequent workshops.

	Numbers attending the workshop
Land managers	8
Community groups	3
National agencies/ NGOs	9
Local agencies/ NGOs	6
Other local businesses	2
James Hutton Institute	4

Figure 1. The stakeholders who attended the workshop, classed by their numbers per 'category'.

As an '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 identifying the range of benefits that people find important in this area of Aberdeenshire, and how these values are linked to land use choices. Objects included a bottle of (local) water, a bottle of whisky, a camera trap for recording wildlife, a locally sourced Shepherd's Pie, locally sourced wild venison, a local woodland newsletter, an image of an endangered species, a map of Scotland as it was in the 1930's and a guide to local walks. Images showed favourite views or places, cross-country skiing, a sawmill, cattle, a local fishing beat, a flood terrace scheme, a family home in Huntly and a picture of the participant as a young farmer.

Exercise One: Mapping Benefits arising from the Land

This exercise initially involved seven small groups (3-5 participants per group, along with a facilitator) identifying areas of different land uses and marking the various benefits that the land provides (or enables the provision of) directly onto large ordinance survey maps. Other benefits that were difficult to map were recorded separately. 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 (see figure 2 for an example). However, in comparison to the Ballater/ Upper Dee workshop the majority of participants seemed to speak about the Huntly area in more general terms and to identify the benefits for the area as a whole, often without identifying specific locations.



Figure 2. The focus area with annotations indicating land use types and the benefits each of those land uses provides in different part of the area.

The groups identified a large number of land uses and benefits in the area. These land uses can be broadly defined as land for agriculture and land for forestry. Within these land uses participants identified a number of benefits, namely; the ability to use land for renewable energy production, recreation, conservation and culturally significant land. However as noted earlier the multiple benefits and land uses can often overlap and occur simultaneously on the same piece of land. The identified benefits emerging from the various land uses are summarized below.

The main land uses in the Huntly area are agriculture and forestry, and indeed all groups spoke about these at length. Most of the study area is used for agriculture, with livestock farming in the western, hillier parts of the region and arable farming in the lowlands. There is a mix of arable and livestock farming in the area due to the varying quality of the land and practices of the local farmers. Benefits derived from agriculture are food production, provision of open scenery, job opportunities (both directly on farms and indirectly in Huntly itself), and benefits for biodiversity. A large amount of the area around Huntly has been forested, the majority of which is managed by Forestry Commission Scotland. The benefits identified from forestry and woodlands were timber, recreation such as walking and Nordic skiing, biodiversity (although this was contested, with other participants stating that many forests are not actually especially good for biodiversity indicating that forestry may need to be sub-divided into woodland types), shooting, energy and carbon offsetting. Figure 3 shows one of the groups working through the mapping exercise.



Figure 3. A group of stakeholders identifying land use types, benefits from the land and annotating a map of the Huntly area with this information.

There is noticeable tension between forestry and farming land uses in the area which is unsurprising given that they make use of the land in very different ways. A number of participants highlighted spots within the study area which were previously good quality agricultural land-holdings and had since been forested. This in turn has impacts on the availability of land for young and new farmers and the potential for food production. However other participants thought some of this newly forested land was on either vacant land-holdings or on land with poor soil quality and as a result would be unprofitable for agriculture. Many participants suggested it would make more sense to plant trees in strips for instance along the edges of fields rather than in blocks as this would open the land for agriculture/ recreation, provide income for the farmers and could still provide the same benefits in terms of biodiversity.

Recreation is another important benefit obtained from the land in the Huntly area which was highlighted by the participants. Many people either live in, or come to visit, the area due to its recreational opportunities such as walking and skiing, but there are limits to these benefits with poor access and connections (e.g. through gates and fences) affecting many walking paths. Recreational benefits are also affected by the seasonal nature of Scotland's tourism and outdoor pursuits industry. Some participants noted the importance of tourism and its benefits to the area (such as employment opportunities), but others do not believe tourism is an important part of the economy in Huntly.

Renewable energy, in particular the use of land for wind turbines within the study area, was a

contentious topic with some participants speaking about them more favourably than others. Concerns were raised over the appropriate location and size of the wind farms and height of the turbines with many participants highlighting it would be more beneficial in terms of energy production to have wind farms rather than single turbines (of which there were vast numbers) within the area. On the other hand many other participants felt that small turbine developments were more favourable than the large developments because the investment and return was kept locally. Benefits associated with conservation of wildlife (e.g. fish stocks) or the protection of the aesthetic qualities, along with heritage and cultural benefits were also identified as important benefits. The participants identified a number of archeological and symbolic sites, such as at Rynie and Tap O'Noth which have brought important benefits to the area such as revenue from visiting archaeologists and tourists.

The participants were also asked about the benefits that could not be tied to a particular location on the map; these included a good quality of life, a sense of wellbeing, community spirit and the vibrancy of Huntly town and its surroundings. These benefits arise from the overall composition of the land scape and the activities that go on in them and therefore highlight that it is the landscape as a whole and the combination of its attributes that are important as well as the benefits derived from particular places or areas of land.

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 and each card had a factor that might affect decision-making written on it (for example, *skills and experience*, *finances*, *subsidies*, *personal interests* and so on), along with a number of blank cards (where they could write any factors that they felt were also important to their particular land use decision). The participants were asked to choose a land use decision that they had experience of, or that was relevant to their own situation, and record it in the middle of their empty decision-making map. Then they placed the factors on the map where they felt they were most relevant. Factors that were 'most important' were placed towards the middle of the page and factors of lower importance were placed towards the edges of the page. Factors that were considered to be opportunities were placed on the right-hand side, and factors that were constraints were placed on the left-hand side. Factors which could be either constraints or opportunities were placed above or below the centre of the page. 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 the 'map' as they may also provide insights into what people regard as irrelevant to their decision-making. Figure 4 shows an example of one the maps.



Figure 5. Some of the participants creating their individual decision-making maps

Looking first at the farming maps, of which 5 were of mixed farming, 4 of livestock farming, 1 of organic farming and 1 of arable farming. *Paperwork, infrastructure, buildings and machinery, public opinion* and *age* were common constraints in the majority of farming maps, irrespective of the type of farming. Common opportunities were *incentive schemes* and *finances* (which were present in almost all of the farming maps). A common factor, particularly with the majority of mixed and livestock farming maps was *land area*, which was often placed in the middle as it could be classified as either an opportunity or a constraint depending on the availability of land. These farming maps highlight that farmers face many of the same opportunities and constraints, irrespective of their specific type of farming. However this is not to say that this is a prototype for decision-making within farming as different types of farming are constrained by different types of paperwork and require different types of infrastructure, or would be enticed by different types of incentive schemes. Nevertheless these are important factors within farmer decision-making in the Huntly area.

Another popular topic for the decision-making maps was tourism and recreation (these included decisions for a participant's own tourist business, decisions for general recreation and two maps on walking). All participants in this 'group' indicated that *time* was a constraint as tourism and recreation are often considered to be luxury activities for which people do not always have time. The majority highlighted *paperwork* and *finances* as common constraints as again tourism and recreation are expensive for both the providers and the users. *Public opinion* and *markets* were common factors which could be either opportunities or constraints, as they could fall within either category depending on the audience. *Peers* was a factor which was unused by all within this group.

Community work was another popular topic, with 4 maps produced on the specific topics of decisions for community education, for community allotments, and two on (broadly) community food production. Common constraints are *finances* and *time*, which are present on the majority of these maps. *Skills and experience* are a common opportunity on all of these maps, whilst *personal interests*, *labour* and *age* are opportunities common on the majority of maps. *Ownership* is a common factor in all of these maps, but is not uniformly considered an opportunity or a constraint, as this can vary.

Another set of maps can be classed as decisions regarding the uptake of renewable energy by farmers or land managers. Constraining factors which were presented on all of these maps were *public opinion*, *paperwork* and *time*. Opportunities found on all three of these maps were *incentive schemes*, *ownership* and *personal interests*. For the three biodiversity/ conservation maps (more specifically maps on conserving fish stocks, improving biodiversity, and nature conservation) *finances* were a common constraint in all maps and *personal interests* were a common opportunity, as an interest in the species or place you are conserving will often be beneficial. Many other factors are present in a couple of the maps including *ownership* and *infrastructure* as constraints and *skills and experience* and *public opinion* as opportunities. The participant who created the single forestry map, specifically plantation forestry highlighted *ownership* and *land area* as the most important ambiguous factors, *markets*, *infrastructure*, *buildings and machinery*, and *land capability* as the most important constraining factors and finally *incentive schemes* and *flexibility* (not reversibility/ flexibility which was unused) as the most important opportunities.

Early analysis of the decision-making maps have highlighted that *infrastructure*, *buildings and machinery* is often a major constraint for land use decision-making in the Huntly area, irrespective of the specific ‘type’ of decision, the same can be said regarding *incentive schemes* as a common opportunity. Factors such as *ownership* and *personal interests* were frequently cited as being very important in the participants’ decision-making however there are variations with regard to whether they are constraints, opportunities or neither category. This early analysis does highlight the similarities that exist in land use decision-making in the Huntly area and that as a result there may be more scope for better integration of decision-making regarding ‘competing’ land uses. Further and more detailed analysis of both the OS maps and the decision-making maps will be carried out and the results will help to inform the next steps of the Rural Land Use Pilot and the planning for the next workshops.

Next Steps

The James Hutton Institute is collaborating 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 the benefits from land when there are often competing or conflicting objectives among and between policy and private interests. 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 Scottish Government Land Use policy team to inform the review of the Land Use Strategy in 2015-6. Our next step is to plan the second group of workshops, in both

the Upper Dee and Huntly areas to be held in spring 2014. We will also collate the information obtained from this workshop with the initial Upper Dee workshop held in October 2013 to compare the results. The second round of workshops will look at potential scenarios for the future, and the third round (late 2014) will focus on evaluating the trade-offs in benefits from different possible future scenarios. We would encourage all those who attended the first workshop to attend the second and third workshops, along with invitees who were unable to attend this workshop. We also welcome suggestions for other participants.

Since the 20th January workshops we have been analysing the information provided by the activities in the workshops. The main results relating the benefits and land use conflicts identified from the workshop will be communicated to the RLUP team for use at their next steering group meeting. Further information on the workshop analysis will be available in due course, however if you would like any information in the meantime please contact Anja Byg on 01224 395411 (Anja.byg@hutton.ac.uk). We may also, if the participants are willing, be in contact with them for more individual information in the future.

Workshop Feedback

In total 20 out of 28 participants completed (or partially completed) the feedback forms which indicate that the majority of participants found the workshop to be *useful* or *very useful*. The remaining participants considered it to be *somewhat useful*. The reasons for this were because some participants felt it was too early in the process to gauge its usefulness, or because this initial workshop was to help us at the James Hutton Institute obtain the background and baseline information for the process rather than providing the participants with new information for land use decision-making. The latter will hopefully be addressed in the next set of workshops. The participants enjoyed hearing the views of a variety of land users and learning (from each other) about some local land issues and concerns. All of the participants who answered the question/ filled out the feedback forms (18 out of 28) would be keen attend the future workshops. Regarding improvements that could be made for the next set of workshops, the issues of having a wider variety of professions/ organisations in the small group exercises and the use of a PowerPoint (to save paper) will be considered.

Finally suggested groups to be invited to the next set of workshops are more agricultural consultants, (of which some were invited but they unfortunately could not attend). However the suggestion of inviting other landowners such as MPs and Lords and government officials to explain the reasons behind the various land related policies, although interesting, is not within the remit of this research, particularly because our focus is to build an understanding of how local people make decision over land use and the benefits that land provides to society.

Appendix

Name	Organisation
Irina Birnie	Aberdeenshire Council
James Davidson	Aberdeenshire Council

Gordon McKilligan	Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum
Charles McCombie	Auchencrieve Farm
Tom Johnston	Cottown Farm
Twig Champion	Deveron Arts Centre
Kate Sargent	Deveron Arts Centre
Claudia Zeiske	Deveron Arts Centre
Richie Miller	Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Trust
Sandy Scott	Dukewell Farm
Iain Anderson	Forestry Commission Scotland
Fiona Manson	Huntly and District Tourism Action Group
Hilda Lumsden-Gill	Huntly Community Council
Sharon Scapens	Huntly Development Trust
Mary Scott	Huntly Development Trust
Roger Polson	Knock Farm
Stevie Wright	Loanend, by Gartly
Angus Smith	Mains of Mayen Farm
Garry Christie	Midtown of Glass Farm
Gordon Christie	Murdoch, McMath and Mitchell Solicitors
Marie Jessiman	Murdoch, McMath and Mitchell Solicitors
John Gordon	National Farmers Union Scotland/ Wellhead Farm
Maria Perkins	Networks of Wellbeing (Huntly Mental Health)
Rose Toney	North East Local Biodiversity Plan
Hywel Mags	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Caroline Simmers	Scottish Environment and Protection Agency
Gillian Forbes	Scottish Natural Heritage
Colin Shepherd	Strathbogie Archaeology Group

Figure 5. List of workshop participants and the organisations/farms they represent

In terms of stakeholders whom we invited but could not attend, these included Scottish Land and Estates, other Estate owners/ managers, Marr area partnership, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Water, agricultural consultants, the local distillery and Huntly Cattle Mart.