

Triggering environmental transformation on large land holdings

Interview protocol

Interviewer name:

Participant ID #:

Date of interview:

Welcome and thanks to interviewee

1. Introduction to researcher and the project, including overview of purpose of interview within wider project aims.

The purpose of these interviews is to assess how environmental changes in large land-holdings can be supported and enabled. Achievement of the UK's net zero goals depend on the actions of the private landowners who control most of the UK's land, and need to occur at pace and scale. Large landowners are particularly important for their ability to shift the trajectory of large volumes of land, often have the skills and resources to pursue diverse trajectories, and are uniquely suited to achieving landscape scale change. I am going to be asking about events or experiences which lead decision-makers to actively re-evaluate their current activities and goals and decide whether or not to make changes.

1. Reiterate key points in consent form – e.g. pseudonymity of interviewees and confidentiality of data, opportunity to withdraw.

Interviewee background

1. Confirm name and titles they have, and which would they like to use in the research?
[Note gender, approximate age]

2. Running an estate requires a lot of varied knowledge. People get expertise in all kinds of ways: formal education, personal study or practice, job experience, and so on. In what ways did you gain your knowledge/expertise?

Estate information

1. Can you describe the estate to me? Let's start with location and size.

- what is your current role in the estate and how long have you been in that role? (owner/potential successor)

2. I would like to understand the range of activities you undertake on the estate. Could you tell me about the range of things that take place?

Prompt: ask about activities and businesses (direct/indirect involvement), diversity or range of people that are involved in and work and live on the estate, management (who engages in decision-making about what)

3. Can you tell me about the history of the estate? (length of family ownership, past activities, etc.)
4. What are a couple of the significant changes that have taken place [since you became involved/in the past 50 years depending on history of estate]?
Prompt for: micro/meso/macro level changes if necessary e.g. discontinuing/taking up production of certain commodities, diversification into housing/business unit provision, contracting out land/activities
5. What were the factors that prompted or motivated these changes? (e.g. because of succession, financial difficulties, disease outbreak, climate change, market opportunities, new government grant programmes, personal interest)
6. How did you find the information you needed to make the decision? (e.g. consultants, neighbours, government)
7. What tradeoffs were weighed and made? What were the impacts of the decision? What was learned?

Environmental attitudes and related action

1. The following questions ask about decisions that may have been made that relate to environmental factors. This research is prompted in part by the Scottish Government's Net Zero target and concerns about resilience to climate change. Storm Eowyn is an example of a recent weather event that may have affected the landscape around you. Our research in Hutton and analysis by the Met Office indicate that Scottish winters seem to be getting wetter¹. Can you give any examples of environmental changes that have affected your estate?
2. How have environmental concerns factored into your decision-making?
Prompt: e.g. consideration of issues, uptake of government programmes
Prompt: where information was found, tradeoffs
3. Have you changed anything you are doing/taken up new activities due to these concerns?
Prompt: e.g. peatland restoration – or drainage in the past, afforestation, carbon credits
4. What sort of environmental actions would you not consider taking, and why? [what have you seen others doing that you would/wouldn't consider?]
5. What are the different considerations when looking at making change on a large scale?

¹ "Global warming: Scotland's climate is 'changing faster than expected'". 2023. BBC Newsround:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/67752727>

Succession processes

1. Do you [your family? Estate?] have a succession plan?
 - why not/what is it and how was it arrived at?
2. What stage of succession are you in?
 - if early stage – are there planned investment/future activities/changes?
 - If just past succession, what changes were implemented?
3. Have there been barriers or factors that inhibit change (e.g. capital, or soft factors like tradition/family expectations)
4. What are your goals for the future? (and how far in the future do you consider setting goals for?)
 - What assists or impedes planning for longer timelines? Is there something you'd like to do but can't/can't now?

Wrapping up

Do you have any final thoughts? Is there anything that you thought we would talk about that we haven't talked about yet? What is the most important thing you have told me today?

Thank you very much for your time [describe the next steps with the project].