

## Environment

## Land Use Strategy (LUS) Delivery Evaluation Project Scotland, 2014

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Scotland's first Land Use Strategy (LUS) – *Getting the best from our land* – was published in March 2011. The LUS is a requirement of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, highlighting the important contribution that Scottish Ministers expect land use and land management to make towards the climate change agenda in Scotland. The LUS is also a response to the widespread consensus that Scotland's land is not performing as well as it could, especially given the continued, increasing and sometimes competing demands placed on land for the provision of benefits (through ecosystem services). The crucial component of the LUS are its ten principles for sustainable land use – the LUS Principles. The LUS Principles translate the strategic intent of the national level LUS into regional and local level planning and decision-making, through existing land use delivery mechanisms, to inform action on the ground. The aim of the LUS Delivery Evaluation Project therefore was “to evaluate the range of current land use delivery mechanisms, to ascertain their effectiveness in translating the strategic Principles of the LUS into decision-making on the ground”. The evaluation considered eleven examples of land use delivery mechanisms ranging from an urban Local Development Plan (LDP) to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Partnership Plan. The Scottish Government are also piloting Regional Land Use Frameworks (LUF) as an alternative mechanism for translating the LUS at the regional level (2013 – 2014). The Scottish Government anticipate that the LUS Delivery Evaluation Project and the Regional LUF Pilots will inform the first review of the LUS in 2016.

### Main Findings

The LUS Delivery Evaluation Project adopted a case study based approach drawing on data from eleven case studies which were all examples of land use delivery mechanisms. This means that the findings described in this summary report are illustrative of land use delivery in Scotland and not definitive.

- There is significant capacity to deliver sustainable land use, as advocated by the LUS, within Scotland's existing land use delivery mechanism 'landscape'.
- The translation of the LUS Principles into decision-making on the ground by the case studies has been primarily implicit rather than explicit, with their consideration teased out by the research.
- The LUS Principles are relevant and can be applied in many different contexts, at different scales and across different land use/management sectors.
- Some LUS Principles are more readily translated into decision-making on the ground than others. A particular concern in this regard, given the provenance of the LUS within the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, is that LUS Principle F on climate change was only partially translated by the majority of case studies.
- The suite of ten LUS Principles is internally compatible and most Principles are relevant to land use delivery in most instances.
- There are many examples from the case studies of existing methods and approaches that can be used to help translate the LUS Principles into decision-making on the ground.
- Notwithstanding the above findings, there were many examples of potential barriers to the translation of the LUS Principles identified through the research across several categories.

## Research approach

The evaluation was centred on eleven case study land use delivery mechanisms selected by the Scottish Government to represent a range of different scales, sectors and geographical locations across Scotland. The eleven case studies were as follows: 1) Buccleuch Estates Whole Estate Development Plan (WEDP); 2) the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN); 3) the Coigach-Assynt Living Landscape (CALL) initiative; 4) the Dee Catchment Partnership; 5) Glasgow City Council's Local Development Plan (LDP); 6) the Perth and Kinross and Stirling and Clackmannanshire Forestry and Woodland Strategies (FWS); 7) Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP); 8) the Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) Monitor Farms Programme; 9) the North Harris Trust; 10) the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere; and 11) the Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES) initiative.

Using three main data collection methods (document review, semi-structured interviews and a workshop), the case studies were engaged throughout the research project (April 2012 – April 2014) to develop an understanding of their relationship with the LUS. An evaluation framework comprising a suite of five headline Research Questions and a number of more detailed sub-questions was then used to analyse the data and tease out an understanding of how the eleven case study land use delivery mechanisms were considering and translating the LUS Principles (see Box 1) into decision-making 'on the ground'. The overall research approach is illustrated in Figure 1. The five headline Research Questions were as follows:

1. Have the high level LUS Principles been (implicitly or explicitly) translated into decision-making on the ground? And if they have, how well?
2. In what situations and how have the LUS Principles been translated?
3. What methods and approaches are working well and not so well and why? What successful aspects might be applied more generally across Scotland in a range of different circumstances?
4. Are there any key barriers to the application of the LUS Principles? And if there are, what are the likely reasons and what lessons can be learned for more general application across Scotland?
5. What are the emerging themes on how best to apply the LUS Principles to different circumstances and process across Scotland? Are there any particular lessons for specific circumstances and different groups of decision-makers and stakeholders?

### Box 1: LUS Principles

- A. Multiple benefits
- B. Regulation
- C. Primary use
- D. Ecosystem services
- E. Landscape change
- F. Climate change
- G. Vacant & derelict land
- H. Outdoor recreation & access
- I. Involving people
- J. Land use & the daily living link

*Note: these are the abbreviated titles of the LUS Principles used by the research team – see the main report for the full version of the Principles.*

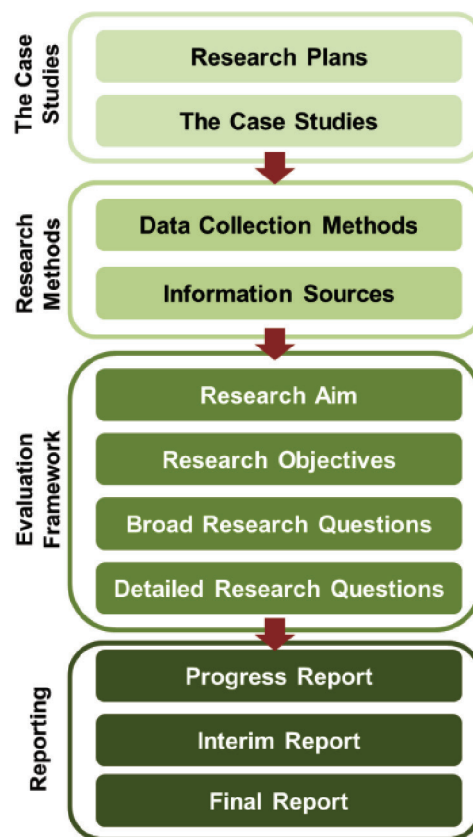


Figure 1: Overall research approach

## Defining what is meant by 'on the ground'

The LUS Delivery Evaluation Project and the LUS itself is premised on the notion of the LUS Principles informing decision-making 'on the ground'. 'On the ground' in this sense means practical action that 'breaks ground' causing a tangible impact in the landscape in terms of land use/management change e.g. forest harvesting and planting operations, deer fencing, stocking densities for grazing management or the construction of built development. Within the timescales of the LUS Delivery Evaluation Project and the specific scope/

focus of the case studies, it was not possible to evaluate decisions that resulted in practical land use/management action 'on the ground' as per the definition above.

As a pragmatic alternative, the research team (in consultation with the Scottish Government) defined specific 'on the ground' decision-making junctures, within each case study's wider framework of governance, planning and decision-making activities, that could be used to evaluate translation of the LUS Principles. This is described at paragraph 2.29 onwards in the LUS Delivery Evaluation Project Final Report. The specific 'on the ground' decision-making juncture defined for each case study has influenced the scope of the research findings. In particular, the research has only considered certain case study reports, policies, projects, studies and activities. As a result, the organisations responsible for the case studies will most likely have undertaken a range of sustainable land use activities that have not been considered within the research.

## Translation of LUS Principles has been primarily implicit

As per headline Research Question No.1, the Scottish Government recognised from the outset that translation of the LUS Principles by the range of existing land use delivery mechanisms in Scotland (including the case studies considered in this research) could well be implicit rather than explicit. This was reflected in the research findings i.e. for the most part the LUS Principles are not discussed explicitly in the case studies and their consideration had to be teased out using evaluation criteria. Importantly, this was found to be the case even when the case study 'on the ground' decision-making juncture (see above) took place after the adoption of the LUS in March 2011. In effect, it is hard to separate out the direct influence of the LUS over and above existing sustainable land use/management practice.

## Delivery of sustainable land use via existing land use delivery mechanisms

The research found that the LUS Principles have been translated into decision-making 'on the ground', at least to a degree, in the majority of instances<sup>1</sup> evaluated in the research (99 out of 110 instances). As such, on the basis of the eleven case study land use delivery mechanisms considered, this research has found that there may already be significant capacity to deliver sustainable land use, as per the requirements of the LUS, within Scotland's existing land use delivery mechanism 'landscape'.

<sup>1</sup> There are ten LUS Principles and eleven case study land use delivery mechanisms equating to 110 possible 'instances' of LUS Principle translation within the research.

Although this is an important and policy relevant finding, it is crucial to stress that there is still room for improvement in terms of the ability of existing land use delivery mechanisms to translate the LUS Principles. In particular, although the LUS Principles were translated to varying degrees in 99 out of 110 possible instances, Principles were only translated fully in 57 instances. Further information on how this part of the evaluation was undertaken can be found at paragraph 3.3 onwards in the LUS Delivery Evaluation Project Final Report.

## Translation of some LUS Principles has been more comprehensive than others

The degree to which the LUS Principles have been translated into decision-making 'on the ground' by the case studies varies across the ten Principles. In particular, the translation of LUS Principle A on **multiple benefits**, C on **primary use**, D on **ecosystem services**, E on **landscape change**, I on **involving people** and J on **land use and the daily living link** was identified as having been more comprehensive.

Conversely, translation of LUS Principle B on **regulation**, F on **climate change**, G on **vacant and derelict land** and H on **outdoor recreation and access** was more mixed. The relative degree of translation may be a function of the evaluation criteria and methodology adopted – i.e. the criteria, whilst reflecting the nature and scope of the LUS Principles, are quite onerous. For example, where case studies met some but not all of the criteria against a given Principle, they were assessed as having only translated the Principle to a degree.

LUS Principle F on **climate change**, which was translated fully by only five of the eleven case studies, is a case in point and especially significant given the provenance of the LUS within the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. In particular, the evaluation criteria for LUS Principle F included issues relating to both climate change mitigation and adaptation – where it was evident that the case study land use delivery mechanisms were only delivering against either the mitigation or the adaptation agenda, they were only considered to have translated the Principle to a degree.

## Relevance and internal compatibility of the ten LUS Principles

On the basis of the eleven case study land use delivery mechanisms, LUS Principles were considered to be not relevant in only a small handful of instances<sup>2</sup> (7 out of 110). This relates specifically to LUS Principle B on **regulation** and G on **vacant and derelict land**, both of which are highly context specific and therefore potentially not relevant to land use/management in a given area or for a specific land use

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

delivery mechanism. Also, the research has identified how the ten Principles generally work well together as a suite i.e. there are no particular areas of internal conflict or inconsistency between the Principles.

## Useful methods and approaches that can help translate the LUS Principles

There are many examples from the case studies of existing useful methods and approaches that can help land use/management stakeholders and practitioners translate the LUS Principles into decision-making 'on the ground'. These include specific methods/approaches under the following broad categories: 1) spatial analysis; 2) environmental assessment; 3) ecosystem services; 4) partnerships and governance; 5) engagement and awareness-raising; 6) planning and design; and 7) grants and incentives.

Within these categories there are long established, widely used methods and approaches such as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the use of spatial analysis and spatial datasets to undertake constraints analyses. There are also key examples of emerging innovative practice that could potentially be developed into more mainstream approaches. These include specific innovations in spatial analysis, the use of ecosystem service assessments to better understand land use values and the use of cross-boundary partnership working at the landscape or ecosystem scale.

## Barriers to the translation of LUS Principles

Whilst there are many useful examples of methods and approaches that can support translation of the LUS Principles, the research also identified a number of key barriers across the following broad categories: 1) methods and data; 2) grants, incentives and revenue; 3) land manager skills, awareness and training; 4) public awareness of land use issues; 5) partnerships, governance and leadership; 6) land use decision-making; and 7) land use policy interactions and constraints.

Within the identified barriers, two key themes were identified. Firstly, the barriers that were experienced most widely by the case studies relate to the availability of data and methodologies/techniques required to support the **planning** of more integrated land use/management and the availability of grants/incentives and revenue streams to support the **delivery** of integrated land use. Secondly, other barriers experienced by a number of the case studies cluster around **partnership working, governance and leadership** and **land use decision-making** issues.

## Emerging themes on how best to apply the LUS Principles

**Scale and tiering:** The LUS Principles are inherently strategic and can be applied at different scales. However, consideration may need to be given as to how the Principles are applied at different scales (e.g. national, regional, local) and between related/tiered land use delivery mechanisms operating at different scales, such as the various policies and plans that make up the statutory planning system in Scotland. The Scottish Government are currently (2013 – 2015) considering how a regional level land use delivery mechanism – the Regional Land Use Framework (LUF) Pilots – could potentially provide a useful policy 'stepping stone' between the national level LUS and the delivery of practical land management 'on the ground'. This sort of regional scale approach was evidenced in several of the case studies operating at this scale, including examples of how planning at this level can usefully articulate the LUS Principles in greater detail through the use of, for example, local priorities, targets and objectives.

**Use of methods and approaches to help translate the LUS Principles:** The research has highlighted how there is no one perfect method or approach to support land use/management planning and delivery that can be used in all circumstances or for all ten LUS Principles. Rather, practitioners should use a suite of methods and approaches of relevance to the specific land use/management context or problem. The methods and approaches identified through this research can be used as an initial basis for the development of land use delivery methods though this should be supplemented by wider research.

## Particular lessons for specific circumstances and stakeholders

**Scottish Government:** There is an obligation to enhance the delivery and deliverability of the LUS by careful integration of the LUS Principles across all relevant Scottish Government policies and initiatives that influence land use and land management. This approach is already enshrined within the LUS. As implied above, there is already a wealth of good-practice in sustainable land use and land management in Scotland. There may be scope for this good-practice to be shared more widely e.g. through specific training events and through the Scottish Government's annual LUS Stakeholder Event. Regional scale land use planning can provide a useful policy 'stepping stone' between the national level LUS and practical land management action 'on the ground'. Depending on the outcome of the Regional LUF Pilots there may be scope to roll out this sort of approach more widely in Scotland.

**Other government agencies:** The use of more novel tools to support land use/management planning was evidenced by a number of the case studies – e.g. the use of ecosystem service assessment. Crucially however these methods are often linked to specific barriers – e.g. in the case of ecosystem service assessment there was a concern that without standardised methodologies, land owners would not accept ecosystem service values as an input to land use/management decision-making. There are also issues concerning access to government agency owned or managed datasets that can be required to support the use of specific tools and approaches (e.g. access to flood extent data for use in spatial analyses of land use constraints and opportunities). In this regard, there may be scope for other relevant government agencies to develop training, capacity building and guidance and to extend the availability of datasets to support the standardisation and adoption of methods and approaches. This in turn should help to provide better evidence to inform sustainable land use/management decision-making.

**Local authorities and planners:** Evidence from this research and wider anecdotal evidence suggests that the LUS is a bit of an ‘unknown quantity’ to some land use stakeholders in Scotland, in the sense that it is perceived primarily as a rural policy issue. As such, this was particularly the case for those working in more urban local authorities, planners working primarily within the Town and Country Planning regime and elected members of local councils. Full implementation of the LUS across Scotland will require all land use stakeholders to be aware of their role in delivery.

**Estate managers and landowners:** Private landowners are increasingly required to manage their land for the delivery of public goods. Furthermore, the Scottish Government expect that the LUS and its ten Principles for sustainable land use will be used to guide decisions about the future use of land, including land in private ownership. Whilst there is a wealth of good-practice in sustainable land use/management in Scotland, there is still a requirement for training and capacity building to support the move towards more integrated land use/management planning across the private as well as public estate. There is also a need to strike an appropriate balance between the use of regulation and grants/incentives.

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, please contact us at [socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or on 0131-244 2111.

ISBN: 978-1-78412-483-0

APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS30065 (05/14)



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