

The Natural Capital Initiative



Open Forum

Enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment

Charles Darwin House, London

16th February 2011

Meeting report



Meeting organiser

The Natural Capital Initiative aims to support the development of UK science, policy and practice aligned with the ecosystem approach; a way of looking at whole ecosystems in decision making and for valuing the goods and services they provide. In relation to this aim, NCI is:

- Providing an independent and inclusive forum for debate;
- Identifying gaps in science, policy and its implementation and facilitating the debate about how to address these gaps;
- Liaising with, and informing, key Government, Research Council and other initiatives, and
- Engaging the public and inspiring the next generation.

NCI is a partnership between the British Ecological Society, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Society of Biology. www.naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk

Meeting sponsor

NCI is grateful to the Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (ERC) for sponsoring the meeting. Sciencewise ERC is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), helps policy makers to understand and use public dialogue to inspire, inform and improve policy decisions around science and technology. It consists of a comprehensive online resource of information, advice and guidance together with a wide range of support services aimed at policy makers and all the different stakeholders involved in science and technology policy making, including the public. The Sciencewise- ERC also provides co-funding to Government departments and agencies to develop and commission public dialogue activities. www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

Sciencewise ERC sponsored several public dialogue projects relating to land use and ecosystem futures, which were represented at the 'Citizen Choices' Open Forum.

http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/dialogue_topics/issues/3

The Natural Capital Initiative gratefully acknowledges the work of Carl Reynolds as facilitator for the meeting.

Summary

The ecosystem approach is a strategy for environmental management described in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Among the principles of an ecosystem approach are that management of the natural environment should be a matter of societal choice. Project experience across the UK can help us learn how to better enable citizens and communities to bring together knowledge relating to land and nature and make appropriate choices.

This report summarises focal points of discussions during an Open Forum on 16th February 2011. The meeting brought together 35 people with experience of initiating, running and evaluating public dialogue on land use and the natural environment. It was organised by the [Natural Capital Initiative](#) with support from [Sciencewise-ERC](#)¹.

From the discussions on 16th February 2011, it was clear that the dialogue needed to enable citizen choices about land use and the natural environment needs to take the form of a continual process, as opposed to a series of fixed-term projects. Effective planning and scoping of dialogue processes is needed to ensure that all sectors of society have opportunities to deliberate all available forms of knowledge.

¹ Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre, funded by the UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills.

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Introduction: citizen choices

The Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the ecosystem approach; a way of looking at whole ecosystems in decision making and for valuing the benefits they provide for well being. The first principle of the ecosystem approach states that management of the natural environment should be a matter of societal choice.² This choice can be expressed in many ways. Choice is expressed routinely when people decide whether to be involved in the statutory land use planning process and, if so, how. More fundamentally, societal choice about the environment involves proactive deliberation of what land and nature provides for people now and in the future. It involves making use of all available knowledge and expertise, whether this is local insight or technical know-how.

The emerging ideas of ‘localism’ and ‘Big Society’, put forward by the Coalition Government in Westminster, provide an added impetus for finding new ways of enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment. Choice does not, however, imply freedom. Choices are made within the context of the constraints and opportunities associated with changing natural environment, as well as society itself. Citizens and communities³ can develop a greater understanding of these constraints and opportunities through dialogue and deliberation.

The notion of ‘ecosystem services’ is emerging as a focus for the work of scientists seeking to address the environmental challenges of the 21st Century. Ecosystem services are the benefits people derive from the natural environment, such as food, fuel and recreation. The term ‘ecosystem service’ has so far mainly been the preserve of scientists and government officials. Nonetheless, the idea behind the term — that the environment provides a wide range of benefits for people and underpins well being — may provide a helpful basis for more effective, and more extensive, public dialogue about land use and the natural environment.

Projects undertaken during the last decade provide a valuable learning opportunity on how to enable citizens and communities to deliberate over land use and the natural environment, building their capacity to make informed choices. They include activities initiated and led by communities, public agencies, civil society organisations and academia. In line with the notion of ecosystem services, some projects have begun to help communities explore the full range of benefits that the natural environment provides for human wellbeing, and the values that people attach to them. Others projects show how different types of expertise and knowledge within and beyond communities can be brought together to build their capacity to make choices.

NCI ‘Citizen choices’ Open Forum

With support from Sciencewise ERC, a sponsor of public engagement on landscape and ecosystem futures, the Natural Capital Initiative organised an Open Forum on 16th February 2011 to draw together lessons from projects that make citizens more central in choices about land use and the natural environment. The aim (**Box 1**) was to share learning, identifying challenges

² <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=7148>

³ Communities can be local (people grouped together because they live in the same place) or communities of interest (such as national or regional leisure interest groups, charities, networks or advocacy groups).

and opportunities and gaining a sense of where next for enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment.

Box 1 – Aim of the NCI Open Forum

With regard to enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment:

1. To bring together learning from relevant project experience.
2. To identify remaining challenges and opportunities.
3. To determine where next for involving citizens and communities.

In November 2010, NCI contacted organisations in the public and third sectors, together with academics and consultants to identify projects that could provide relevant learning opportunities. Invitations were sent to over 120 individuals to attract expressions of interest. Participants were selected on the basis of whether they had relevant learning to offer, either in the form of project experience or experience with evaluating public dialogue projects of others. Places were allocated so as to ensure that projects represented a range of geographical settings, and co-ordination by different types of organisation. A participant list is provided in **Annex A**.

Some of the projects represented at the Open Forum had adopted the notion of ecosystem services as their guiding concept. Others were focused on specific environment-related issues such as woodland, green infrastructure or coastal management without explicit use of ecosystem service terminology.

After short ‘framing the debate’ presentations from Diana Pound (Dialogue Matters) and Rob Fish (University of Exeter), the 35 participants heard key learning points from eight projects that had involved public dialogue about land use and the natural environment (**Box 2**). The programme is provided in **Annex B**.

Following the presentations, the meeting then entered ‘Open Space’, where participants identified topics for discussion (within the overarching objective for the day) and held discussions in small groups to derive action points. Topics discussed were:

- Ensuring engagement is mutually beneficial.
- How to start to apply the ‘ecosystem services approach’ to real decision making.
- Citizen choice and engagement at the strategic level.
- Making ecosystem service valuations explicit.
- How to engage people in complexity.
- Fairness and legitimacy.
- Accessing ‘hard to reach groups’.
- What happens if people don’t care?
- How to continue after the consultation: legacy.
- What is the role of experts?

Box 2 – Short project presentations	
Public dialogue lessons from the Sustainable Uplands Project	Mark Reed, University of Aberdeen
Applying an Ecosystem Services Approach in the Lea Valley Regional Park	Alex White, Scot Wilson/URS
Community dialogue relating to climate change and landscape in Scotland	Elli Carlisle, Scottish Natural Heritage
Dialogue learning from the Norfolk Arable Land Management Initiative	Jilly Hall, Natural England
Forming a development plan for the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park	David Miller, James Hutton Institute
East London Green Grid Project	Peter Massini, Greater London Authority
Strengthening and deepening community engagement in the creation and management of forest sites	Sue Anderson, The National Forest
Valuing goods and services from landscapes in North Wales	Steve Evison, Resources for Change
Summaries are available in Annex C .	

Summary of Open Forum discussions

The following describes focal points for discussion during the Open Forum. It is not intended to be a comprehensive coverage of all points made by participants on the day. The report is based on:

- The reports (notes) provided by the convenors of each discussion group (summarised in **Annex D**).
- The written responses that individual participants recorded during the presentations at the beginning of the meeting.
- Ideas put forward during in the plenary session at the end of the day.

Rationale for enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment

During the meeting, a range of arguments for enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment were put forward:

- It can lead to the development of new knowledge and foresight among communities.
- It can result in more effective responses to the opportunities and challenges that a changing natural environment presents.
- It may mean that decisions taken are more acceptable to the majority of a community.
- It builds capacity amongst citizens to be involved in decision-making processes in the future. This includes skills for effective dialogue.

It was pointed out that several policy documents provide a rationale for participation and deliberation about the natural environment, including the Aarhus Convention^{4,5} and the principles of an ecosystem approach (as defined in the Convention on Biological Diversity)⁶.

In addition to the arguments for steps to enable more effective and more extensive dialogue, there is a continuing need to demonstrate the benefits of participation in dialogue for individual citizens and communities involved, as well as wider society.

Types of activity involved in enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment

Public dialogue about land use and the natural environment needs to be considered within a spectrum of types of interaction between citizens, communities and organisations about the natural environment. These include:

- Activities intended to educate or inform.
- Consultations about plans that have already been made, at least in part.
- Surveys of citizen views and values in order to inform decisions made by others.
- Participation and deliberation with a view to exchanging knowledge and building capacity.

Participation and deliberation can be effective only where there opportunities for citizens and communities to be involved in decision-making are genuine. In cases where decisions have already been made about land use and the natural environment the provision of opportunities for deliberation may be counter-productive. The scope of any apparent opportunities to be involved in decision making should be made explicit.

The different types of activity listed above are not mutually exclusive. One helpful concept is the 'ladder of participation', whereby people start with some initial engagement — perhaps to be informed about a specific issue — and progress to full participation in deliberative processes involving multiple interests, values and ideas.

It was also apparent from discussions at the Open Forum that activities to enable citizen choices about land use and the natural environment should occur at multiple geographical scales and governance levels. One reason is that people may receive benefits from the natural environment a long way from their point of origin. Similarly, people who live in one place have the capacity to make (or at least inform) decisions that affect people far away. Dialogue at these different levels is typically not co-ordinated, even though there are strong advantages to doing so. Government can help by demonstrating its commitment to the deliberation of strategic issues, and ensuring that feedback is provided. It may be helpful for place-based dialogue to involve people from other locations.

⁴ www.unece.org/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf

⁵ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/policy/international/aarhus/>

⁶ <http://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/principles.shtml>

Challenges and opportunities for enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment

1. Making the time required for effective public dialogue available.

Public dialogue about the natural environment and land use has the potential to address the complex systems of how people interact with each other and their surroundings. An advantage of the ecosystem service notion is that it causes people to consider the full range of benefits they and others receive from the environment. Public dialogue is, however, based on trust and takes time to build. Slow dialogue processes built up over many years are therefore preferable to fixed term dialogue projects. The provision of sufficient time for effective deliberation can also be seen as an essential part of ensuring fairness and legitimacy. Where resources to support dialogue processes are limited, it may be advantageous to spread them over a longer time period.

Time is also needed to allow for reflection on what citizens and communities say during dialogue processes, allowing for them to take stock of available knowledge. In order to identify outcomes and derive learning points, evaluations of public dialogue projects concerning the natural environment may need to continue long after the formal close. Public dialogue processes need to be adaptive and allow for improvement.

A further consideration is the time needed to communicate and implement decisions arising from public dialogue processes. An over-arching aim should be that communities take forward dialogue processes themselves.

2. Ensuring that public dialogue is representative.

Often, public dialogue about the natural environment can be dominated by those with vested interests, or those with the time and energy to participate. For this reason, it is important that fairness, legitimacy and transparency are considerations at the planning stage for any public dialogue process. The underlying motivations of people to participate need to be evaluated, bearing in mind that:

- Self-worth is a key part of people's willingness to care about their environment.
- Many believe that public institutions are responsible for safeguarding the natural environment, not citizens and communities.

Third sector organisations and local authority officers are often in a good position to identify networks that may be able to initiate and build effective public dialogue about land use and the natural environment.

Citizens and communities can often be engaged most readily in dialogue about the environment in places where they already meet. An example is the use of schools and youth clubs as places to engage young people. This has been successfully demonstrated in the formulation of a development plan for the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park in Scotland. Engagement of people through

the arts and other cultural activities also has significant potential. Other useful social contexts in which dialogue can be started are outdoor leisure groups.

The involvement of young people in public dialogue about land use and the natural environment is a particular challenge. Social media (web-based and mobile technologies that permit interaction) have a special role in engaging this group.

The mass media represent has a role in contributing to deliberation about land use and the natural environment by citizens and communities. Given that ecosystem services are provided and received at multiple geographical scales, it is important that place-based dialogue involves people who understand wider issues.

3. Enabling dialogue about strategic issues, not just local and short term issues.

People find it harder to engage with environmental issues that are less tangible and immediate to them, even though the cumulative effect of what happens at a local level might be significant at a larger scale. While engaging people in strategic environmental issues will remain a challenge, participation in dialogue about local issues can be an effective starting point. If managed well, conflict and disagreement can form the foundation for dialogue that addresses more complex and fundamental issues. Topics such as flood alleviation and green space planning can form the basis for public dialogue broader, long-term and strategic issues. Issues that affect whole landscapes are a helpful basis for deliberation of ecosystem services because of the variety of services provided and likely diversity of types of habitat and social setting.

It is important for those involved in local dialogue to recognise that the natural environment provides benefits to people in ways that do not follow political or social boundaries. Benefits such as drinking water and food may be received a long way from their origin. Some issues with strong environmental implications, such as energy supply and transport infrastructure, are national issues. Decentralised environmental decision-making that may result from enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment should aim to ensure overall beneficial outcomes at the national scale.

There is a need for a framework that demonstrates the linkage of dialogue occurring at different geographical scales. Some participants of the Open Forum felt that commitment from government to see such a co-ordinated approach would be important.

4. Communicating beneficial outcomes from participation in public dialogue.

Given that public dialogue is based on trust, citizens need to see benefits from being involved. These benefits relate in part to outputs such as written reports and verbal feedback on dialogue that has taken place. More importantly, the benefits relate to outcomes that show what difference the dialogue has made to people 'on the ground'. Without tangible outcomes, it may be hard to engage new participants and keep people involved in dialogue. The National Forest⁷ is an example of where people have been involved in planning for a particular piece of land over an extended period and can

⁷ <http://www.nationalforest.org/>

now experience tangible outcomes of direct benefit to them. In addition, they have the opportunity to be involved in ongoing management.

In addition to demonstrating the benefits of participation in public dialogue processes to individuals who may be involved, there is also a need to assess whether ‘better’ outcomes are achieved in terms of sustainable development, the ecosystem approach or other broad criteria. Research is needed to demonstrate how the outcomes from decision making processes involving participation and deliberation differ from those that take a different approach.

5. Integrating technical knowledge with other forms of knowledge and values

The National Ecosystem Assessment⁸ demonstrates the considerable size of the knowledge base developed by natural and social scientists about the natural environment. There remains a considerable challenge of ensuring that this knowledge can be accessed, communicated, interpreted and used by citizens and communities so as to enable them to make informed choices.

Given that public dialogue is based on trust, the level of confidence that citizens and communities have in scientists is an important consideration. Dialogue between scientists and other citizens is needed to ensure common understanding. In particular, uncertainty is an aspect of scientific knowledge that is sometimes difficult for people to understand and accommodate. Citizen science has an important role in bridging knowledge gaps, and integrating technical knowledge with other forms of knowledge.

Planning is important to map out expertise at the start of a dialogue process and setting boundaries for what knowledge will be introduced. As part of this, the role of official advisors such as researchers and statutory bodies should be clarified.

Citizens and communities should be given opportunities to deliberate technical knowledge gained by scientific process alongside preferences, values and wisdom. It is important, however, to recognise that people are sometimes unable to rationalise their ideas or preferences. Wisdom and instinct should be considered as part of many people’s expertise about the natural environment. Different types of knowledge about the natural environment vary in their capacity for deconstruction. This presents a challenge for all involved in decision making.

There are divergent views on whether values should be made explicit in order to enable citizens and communities to make choices over land use and the natural environment. Values are location specific. It would be useful to develop more clarity about when values deliver benefit for integrated equitable decisions and when they won’t. When valuation takes place (by monetary or other means), it is important to consider the need for a transparent, fully informed, and contestable process.

Where next in enabling citizen choices about land use and the natural environment?

At the end of the Open Forum, participants had an opportunity to suggest key issues for enabling citizen choices. These are summarised as follows:

⁸ <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>

- Make appropriate use of social media to engage ‘hard to reach’ groups in public dialogue about the natural environment.
- Develop a common understanding of ecosystem service assessment – what it involves and the benefits they provide for people.
- Apply current practical lessons from public dialogue projects relating to the natural environment in the UK and in other countries.
- Ensure that biodiversity is part of the ecosystem services debate.
- Recognise that the third sector (non-profit organisations) is a useful gateway to communities but not the voice of communities.
- Develop understanding of our dependence on the natural environment: important for enabling effective public dialogue about it.
- Explore opportunities for enabling citizen choices within broader policy frameworks e.g. the Common Agricultural Policy.
- Involve those advancing the localism agenda in the debate about how to enable citizen choices about land use and the natural environment.

Conclusions

Experience with public dialogue about land use and the natural environment provides a valuable learning opportunity. Common challenges and opportunities can be identified from projects that have been run in very different contexts. The following general conclusions can be made from the Open Forum on 16th February 2011:

- **Processes and projects**

From the discussion at the Open Forum on 16th February, it is clear that the dialogue and deliberation that enables citizen choices should be seen as a continual process. Fixed term projects will not necessarily lead to optimal outcomes for those involved. The time needed to build effective public dialogue processes presents challenges for funding, co-ordination and facilitation.

- **Planning and scoping**

Much of the learning from existing project experience should be applied at the planning stage for dialogue processes, ensuring that they will be representative, and that the diversity of different types of knowledge and value about the environment will be recognised. Given that the natural environment functions as an integrated, inter-dependent system, there is a need to ensure dialogue occurring at different geographical scales is inter-linked.

Annex A – List of participants

Name	Organisation	Specific project of particular relevance
Sue Anderson	The National Forest	
Jayne Ashley	Sustainable Development Commission	
Sarah Bell	Policy Studies Institute	Review of the Big Society Concept in a Natural Environment Setting
Laura Bellingan	Natural Capital Initiative / Society of Biology	
Sarah Buckmaster		RELU Sustainable Uplands Project
Lucinda Butcher	Essex Wildlife Trust	Living Landscapes Project
Elli Carlisle	Scottish Natural Heritage	Community dialogue relating to climate change and landscape in Scotland
Stewart Clarke	Natural England	Upland Ecosystem Service Pilots
Bruce Collinson	East Hampshire District Council	Whitehill Bordon Eco-Town Project
Linda Davies	Imperial College	Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) network
Roger Davies	Llais y Goedwig	
Jonathan Ducker	Land Trust	Long-term management of public spaces for community benefit
Mark Everard	Environment Agency	
Steve Evison	Resources for Change	Public engagement on landscape and ecosystem futures: Wales
Robert Fish	University of Exeter	Participation and an ecosystems approach to decision making. Draft Guidelines
Rosie Hails	Natural Capital Initiative / NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology	
Jilly Hall	Natural England	Norfolk Arable Land Management Initiative
Simon Hill	National Trust	South Milton Sands Project
Bruce Howard	Natural Capital Initiative	
Eleanor Kean	Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology	POST Note on 'Landscapes of the Future'
Melanie Knetsch	Economic and Social Research Council	Public engagement for the Living with Environmental Change Programme

Name		Organisation	Specific project of particular relevance
Anna	MacGillivray	URSUS Consulting Ltd.	Valuing Ecosystem Services in the East of England . Arable agriculture project.
Ceri	Margerison	Natural Capital Initiative / British Ecological Society	
Peter	Massini	Greater London Authority	East London Green Grid
David	Miller	James Hutton Institute	Development plan for the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park
Paul	Miner	Campaign to Protect Rural England	Green Belts: a greener future (see also)
Liz	O'Brien	Forest Research	Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme (see also)
Liz	Oughton	University of Newcastle	Demonstration Test Catchments (Knowledge Exchange component) RELU Managing Borderland Project
Diana	Pound	Dialogue Matters	
Gareth	Price	GIDE Associates Ltd.	Urban Regeneration and Greenspace Partnership
Mark	Pritchard	Kent County Council	Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (see also)
Mark	Reed	University of Aberdeen	RELU Sustainable Uplands Project
Carl	Reynolds	(Facilitator)	
Steve	Smith	Icarus Collective	Evaluation of Sciencewise ERC Public Dialogue Projects
Daniel	Start	Sciencewise ERC	
James	Tweed	Sciencewise-ERC	
Bill	Watts	Environment Agency	
Alex	White	URS Scott Wilson	Lea Valley Project (Valuing Ecosystem Services in the East of England)

Annex B – Programme

10:00	Registration and refreshments
10:30	Introduction and aims
10:40	Framing the discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robert Fish (University of Exeter)• Diana Pound (Dialogue Matters)
11:00	‘Speedy presentations’ on project learning
12:00	Lunch
12:30	Market Place
13:00	Open Space Session 1
14:00	News Wall. Revisit Market Place.
14:15	Open Space Session 2
15:15	News Wall
15:30	Where next for enabling citizen choices? Discussion.
15:55	Next steps and actions
16:00	Formal close

Annex C – Short presentations given at the start of the Open Forum

Note that web links to all projects represented during the Open Forum can be found in Annex A (Participants List).

Stakeholder dialogue lessons from the Sustainable Uplands Project

Mark Reed, University of Aberdeen

The Sustainable Uplands project is for anyone who lives, works, plays or has an interest in upland environments. By combining experience and new ideas from local people with cutting edge natural and social science, the project aims to anticipate, monitor and sustainably manage rural change in UK Uplands. Now in its last year, the Sustainable Uplands project has considered how our Uplands might change under future social, economic and environmental conditions. It has identified a range of innovative and practical solutions to help people cope with and harness these changes and has identified ways policy-makers can support adaptation in Britain's hills.

<http://homepages.see.leeds.ac.uk/~lecmsr/sustainableuplands/>

Applying an Ecosystem Services Approach at site level in the Lea Valley Regional Park

Alex White, URS/Scott Wilson

Focus groups were run to consider options for the future of two sites in the Lee Valley Regional Park. Participants were recruited who were either associated with a local interest group (e.g. Parish Councillors) or were local residents. Participants were asked to think about the future of the sites not just in terms of 'features and uses', but also in terms of the 'benefits' that are derived - and could potentially derived - from the site. Participants were encouraged to think about benefits not just to themselves, but also to the local community, other communities or interest groups and even in terms of the global community. In order to facilitate 'making the links' between 'features and uses' on the one hand, and 'benefits derived' on the other, participants were encouraged to take an intermediate step and consider the 'services provided'(see diagram). It was explained to participants that this is the essence of an approach that has come to be known as 'The Ecosystem Services Approach'.

Climate Change Conversations

Elli Carlisle, Local Landscapes Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Sciencewise-ERC commissioned LUC to work with communities with the purpose of further exploring ways of assessing the effects of climate change on landscape and quality of life at a local level and help communities make informed choices about how they want

these changes managed. The work led on from previous research into climate related landscape change and the implications for quality of life.

The study findings should be relevant in a number of ways including: improving information of locally valued landscape features; informing local landscape management, planning and future policy development; and as practical example of how to engage with local communities on landscape related issues.

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/looking-after-landscapes/landscape-research-andprojects/climate-change-landscape/>

Dialogue learning from the Norfolk Arable Land Management Initiative

Jilly Hall, Natural England

Over five years, the Norfolk Arable Land Management Initiative (NALMI) explored conflict involving broken norms and ineffective sanctions (notably trespass by incomer-riders and retaliation by farmers). Social capital was built by creating safe platforms for social learning in people's homes. New rules, norms and sanctions were jointly developed by riders and farmers leading to the voluntary provision by four farmers of a 2.5 km off-road riding route to improve rider's safety. This 'localised Countryside Code' emerged from conflict. Once it had been agreed, social sanctions successfully curbed free-riders, thus reducing friction and building trust. Farmers profited through the new social networks and regained feelings of control over their land. Public goods were provided at minimal cost to the public purse.

Engaging younger people in the development plan for the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park

David Miller, James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen

Younger people were engaged in developing visions for future land use when preparing development plans for The Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, characterising its natural and social resources, and sharing scenarios and options for the future. These included: replacing lost trees (e.g. felled for access to new houses); cautious about renewable energy (particularly large scale wind farms, neutral to favourable on small scale - for farming, favourable towards hydroelectric); target new housing to local people and the character of villages. They demonstrated positive willingness to participate; practical and credible aspirations; recognition of timescales for change in natural environments, and alignment with their prospective life spans. For wider and deeper future engagement, institutional and communication infrastructures are required, including new governance arrangements for decision-making.

<http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/kte/>

East London Green Grid - participation in projects and policy

Peter Massini, Greater London Authority

The East London Green Grid provides the strategic framework for the promotion and delivery of green infrastructure in East London. It identifies the strategic objectives for the area (in relation to climate change adaptation, informal sport and recreation, biodiversity, and food growing, amongst other things) and identifies those projects which are priorities for delivery. It also provides project details to help catalyse project delivery and project integration. Public participation at the individual project level is usually good (for example, the Beam Parklands project), but how do we ensure public participation at the strategic level? Will the Green Grid be understood and adopted without public participation at this level?

<http://www.designforlondon.gov.uk/what-we-do/all/east-london-green-grid/>

Strengthening and Deepening Community Engagement in The National Forest

Sue Anderson, Community Liaison Officer, The National Forest

The National Forest is transforming 200sq miles across the English Midlands, over 8 million trees have been planted and around 20,000 people take action each year.

Aim to work with communities to take them up the 'Ladder of Participation'.

- raising awareness and understanding - doorstep leaflet
- providing opportunities for new skills and knowledge– Tree from Seed, Plant a Tree
- enabling action – bringing together the key ingredients
- supporting action – community led projects and new groups participants

The next steps are to:

- Promote good management and high quality sites
- Explore social media
- Achieve success with limited budgets

<http://www.nationalforest.org/>

Valuing goods and services from landscapes in North Wales

Steve Evison, Resources for Change

The Cambrian Mountains Project in Wales is working with 3 local community organisations (menter groups) on running EGS discussions. Working through them we also hope to build some local capacity for ongoing conversations by involving their co-ordinators in design and delivery. To date we have run 3 community workshops investigating EGS value and stakeholder views on change. An interesting aspect of this involved a discussion into the role of payments for EGS through grants and taxes. We have also run some street stalls in Aberystwyth. All methods have used interactive and visual methods. We have supported the process with production of two bilingual fliers on EGS and the engagement process we are running.

Annex D – Summaries of discussion group reports

Engagement must be mutually beneficial

Summary of discussion

Typically, communities don't get much back from engagement. There are however, examples of good practice where small groups have been empowered to discuss, deliberate and reach conclusions. Benefits to technical experts also flow from a participatory approach: they gain insight into local knowledge, values and ideas.

Action points:

- Plan carefully dialogue processes carefully.
 - Beware of 'research fatigue' among citizens.
 - Recognise the resource demands of continual dialogue.
 - Form a database of good case studies, contacts/community group leaders – consent issue.
-

How do we start to apply the 'ecosystem services approach' to real decision making?

Summary of discussion:

Overall the 'ecosystem services approach' framework is very useful because it brings together a wide variety of benefits people derive from the natural environment, including cultural factors. A key challenge is embedding this approach in land use planning, as well as discussions about strategic issues such as flooding and climate change. There is a need to provide baseline information on benefits and barriers and constraints to decision to underlie public dialogue process.

Action points:

- Learn lessons from all case studies about the positive and negative aspects of this approach and disseminate widely.
 - Apply the 'ecosystem services approach' to other decisions about land use e.g. green space of flood alleviation as well as planning/localism.
 - Need to educate policy/decision makers about how the 'ecosystem services approach' can add value to current decisions e.g. land use planning/decisions – not just another burden.
-

Citizen choice/engagement at the strategic level

Summary of discussion/action points:

Integrated involvement of citizens in strategic dialogue requires top level commitment. There need to be more work and exchange of people and ideas between policy and community sectors. There needs to be a good understanding of channels of power and hierarchies in the way the way in which people think and make decisions at different geographical scales. Electoral cycles and land use

planning cycles can exclude strategic issues. Complex issues need time for sophisticated discussion.

Making ecosystem service valuations explicit – is it necessary for reaching good environmental decisions?

Summary of discussion:

The necessity of explicit valuation depends on the nature of the dialogue process. For example, flood management is benefits driven, so if this ecosystem service is not valued, it won't be taken into account. In this, it is important to recognise that values are location-specific. Values can help people to deconstruct the benefits they derive from the environment, highlighting things not discussed or considered before. If value some things are monetised will devalue the other things. Valuations of the natural environment, don't lead you to the right decision, whether or not they involve money. However, more information available on values more can help.

Action points:

- Develop more clarity about when values deliver benefit for integrated equitable decisions and when they won't.
 - We need a transparent, fully informed, and contestable valuation processes.
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How can we engage people in complexity?

Summary of discussion:

Engagement in complex real issues needs time and space in order to avoid polarisation of views. A key challenge is enabling groups to move from polarised positions, where people predominantly want others to take action, to a position of taking collective responsibility for the issue. There are examples where groups have moved from abstraction and denial to taking collective responsibility and having meaningful conversations e.g. east energy debates (Wales) management of green infrastructure (London).

Action points:

- Participatory auditing of ways to understand the complexity of the issue.
 - Identify priorities within complex issues, removing 'red herrings'.
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Fairness/legitimacy

Summary of discussion:

Trust is a key issue for ensuring fair and legitimate public dialogue about the natural environment. This requires transparency, time and genuine intention to build long term relationships between participants. Consultation can actually be disempowering. Technology can be useful such as social media can play an important part in ensuring good representation. Careful thought needs to go into the size of meetings. Small meetings, allowing scope for person to person dialogue are important. It

is also important to put the notion of ‘ecosystems services’ into language that connects with local people.

Action points:

- Make a lot of time early in any dialogue process, explaining what can and can’t be done.
 - Make opportunities for scrutiny and transparency.
 - Study power relations between champions and connection.
 - Formalise the bottom up (not community groups as arms of state).
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Accessing ‘hard to reach groups’

Summary of discussion:

Education and the media (print and social) are key parts of engaging people in participatory processes. It is important to know your community interest; asking the right questions to secure participation and seeking to understand underlying motivations. It is possible to access groups by entering their spaces of interactions (e.g. youth clubs), rather than creating new communities of people with an interest in land use and the natural environment. Community ‘champions’ can help gain access to participation.

Action point:

- There is a need for dissemination of key learning about engaging hard to reach groups in dialogue about land use and the natural environment.
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What happens if people don’t care?

Summary of discussion:

Key questions to ask are what motivates people, and what conditions need to exist for people to care. Peoples ‘caringness’ varies with age, status in community and the location where they live. Other factors include a person’s sense of safety and their degree of commitment to the community. Some people are not inclined to engage because of the expectation that public institutions will address issues on their behalf. Self-worth is pivotal – if you don’t care about you, you don’t care about anything. We actually need to connect with what people care about not expecting them to care about our interests.

Action points:

- There is a need to find out what makes people care about their environment, how much people care, and what might make them care more.
 - People’s enjoyment of their environment is a key factor in how much they care about it.
 - Social media is a tool to help people communicate what they value in their environment.
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How to continue after the consultation: legacy

Summary of discussion:

Continuation should be a part of dialogue processes. Public dialogue is about taking people on a journey, not delivering external solutions. For this reason, it is helpful for there to be an 'honest broker' of stakeholder group to take neutral stance during consultation, show transparency and plan for the long term. Need 'terms of engagement' to continue into the long term. Value your participants by ensuring a long-term flow of information to and from them. Independent evaluation is important in showing a willingness to learn and adapt.

What is the role of technical experts?

Summary of discussion:

The challenge is integrating expert knowledge with other knowledge. Trust in scientists is often low. Uncertainty is a big challenge for people trusting scientists and the information they provide. Local expertise can be harnessed via involvement in citizen science. There is a need to ensure that the views of people outside of any one geographic area of consideration are considered. A key question the role of experts and statutory organisations play in this.

Action points:

- Preparation for the involvement of technical experts before the negotiation stage
- Recognise expertise and map it out at the outset.
- To avoid concerns that evidence is being ignored: set boundaries, i.e. what is acceptable in this discussion?
- In contentious areas, it is important to assess how do we weight different views (science *versus* opinion)? Peer review is important in this.