

Appendix 1



Towards Regional Land Use Partnerships - Lessons from existing collaborative partnerships in Scotland

Nicole Ponta¹, Eliane Steiner¹, Marc Metzger² & Galina Toteva²

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nicole.ponta@usys.ethz.ch

Executive summary

The Scottish Government has committed to establish Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) as a means to maximize the potential of land to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. RLUPs present a real opportunity to influence the way land use decisions are made, fostering a more integrated approach and empowering local decision-making. However, their implementation is still hindered by uncertainties regarding their functions and structure. A better understanding of existing collaborative partnerships, their strengths and the challenges they have encountered, can help inform potential options to overcome some of these uncertainties. This study reviewed a selection of partnerships across Scotland to provide informative models for the establishment of RLUPs.

Main findings were:

1. There are profound historic and socio-economic differences across Scotland and there is no one-size-fits-all model, even when two initiatives have the same official designation.
2. Most partnerships play an advisory role and lack enforcement powers.
3. Land ownership is the decisive authority when it comes to land management.
4. Ensuring continuity is a challenge faced by most partnerships.
5. Partnerships recognize the value of investing in social capital, but this does not always translate in to an engagement strategy and there are trade-offs to consider.
6. Landscape scale approaches are becoming the norm, but agencies and NGOs often do not have the resources to manage these large and complex projects.
7. The commitment and dedication of individuals – board members as well as volunteers – have been crucial for the performance of collaborative initiatives.

¹ ETH Zürich

² Edinburgh University

Background and aims

There is increasing pressure on land – a vital resource underpinning Scotland’s economic prosperity and the backbone of nature-based solutions to meet ambitious climate targets (Brown, 2020; Sing et al., 2013). To optimize the benefits land can deliver, whilst ensuring fairness, multiple stakeholders at different scales and with different priorities, necessities, and values, need to be involved in the decision-making process driving land use (Feliciano et al., 2014). The Scottish Government recognizes this and it has committed to establishing Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) by 2021. The commitment stems from the Climate Change Act (2019) and the primary overarching objective of the partnerships is to drive delivery of the land use change needed to meet the 2030 and 2045 climate targets³. Overall, RLUPs represent an opportunity for Scotland to enhance the way land use decisions are made and delivered, increasing transparency and participation, as well as coordination between and within spatial scales and sectors (LINK, 2020; Scottish Land Commission, 2020). There are high expectations placed on RLUPs and wide support from stakeholders, although major uncertainties remain regarding their functions, structure, and implementation.

In several areas of Scotland, regional and local initiatives already deliver integrated land use management, providing a variety of informative models for consideration ahead of the establishment of RLUPs. The Scottish Land Commission has partnered with the University of Edinburgh and ETH Zurich through the *Landscapes as Carbon Sinks* project⁴ to map such initiatives and explore their governance models and functions. By showcasing successful projects and sharing good practice, and by identifying weaknesses and challenges, we aim to inform recommendations made to Scottish Ministers for the establishment of RLUPs.

Research methods

We selected multi-stakeholder community-based, private or public initiatives within the land sector which:

- bring a more strategic and integrated approach to land use operating at the landscape scale
- contribute to the delivery of Scottish climate targets in terms of both reducing emissions from land use and/or increasing carbon sequestration
- are currently active or in a transition phase looking for funding to continue their activities

Initiatives that have already been extensively described in other reports were excluded (Pepper et al., 2019; Waylen et al., 2019).

³ The [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), which amends the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#), sets targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040.

⁴ <https://edinburghcentre.org/projects/landscapes-as-carbon-sinks>

The chosen list of initiatives (Table 1) is not complete but provides a good overview of the diverse collaborative arrangements and serves to collect lessons and recommendations.

For each initiative we carried out a desk-based research by screening websites, newsletters and, when available, strategy or management plans. We grouped the initiatives in three loosely defined groups based on similarities in their governance structure:

- **Type 1:** permanent initiatives with formal links to the Scottish Government through board members elections or other approval mechanisms
- **Type 2:** well-established partnerships whose legacy goes beyond the project level
- **Type 3:** newer initiatives, mainly project focused but looking towards longer term commitment. This type of initiative could become Type 2 over time.
- **Other:** these are initiatives that present alternative approaches difficult to group within the proposed typology but worth to outline in this report.

To develop a better understanding of the governance structures and explore the key factors that have affected their performance, we conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with the coordinators, managers or key actors involved in a subset of initiatives. The subset – selected due to time constraints – represents the different governance types and regions of Scotland. The desk-based research helped frame a set of guiding questions that were tailored depending on the initiative and the amount of information available online. The main findings were then structured using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis framework. Within this context, the SWOT analysis provides a simple framework to describe the collaborative partnerships we interviewed and particularly to highlight good practices and challenging areas that the RLUPs should consider. We grouped statements from the interviews within the four SWOT categories according to the interviewees' opinion. Within the four main categories, we further divided the statements into the sub-categories planning, implementation, governance, budget/staff, collaboration and community engagement.

Table 1 List and brief description of the chosen initiatives

Name of initiative	Governance Type	Lead Partner	Main source of funding	Objectives	Spatial Scale	Active since	Interview
Cairngorms Connect	Other	RSPB	Arcadia and self-funding through partners	Enhance habitats, species and ecological processes	600 km ²	2018	yes
Cairngorms National Park	1	The Cairngorms National Park Authority	Scottish Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation • Sustainable use • Visitors' experience • Sustainable development 	4528 km ²	2003	yes
Callender's Landscape	3	Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park	National Lottery Heritage Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation • Habitat restoration • Enhance recreational opportunities • Record and manage heritage • Improve people's engagement 	Callender's area & surroundings	2015	no
Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape	3	Scottish Wildlife Trust	National Lottery Heritage Fund	Bring environmental and economic benefits	635 km ²	2011	yes
Dee Catchment Partnership	2	Dee Catchment Partnership	multiple funding agencies	Integrated catchment management ensuring sustainable use	2000 km ²	2003	no
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere	2	Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Partnership Board	multiple funding agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation • Sustainable use • Sustainable, Healthy, Equitable Societies • Science and Education for Sustainable Development • Climate change Mitigation and Adaption 	5268 km ²	2012	yes
Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership	2	Multiple lead partners	National Lottery Heritage Fund	To harness the natural and cultural heritage to boost economic activity for a sustainable future.	590 km ²	2015	no
Inner Forth Futures	2	RSPB	National Lottery Heritage Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote natural, cultural and historic heritage 	202 km ²	2018	yes

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower communities • Increase resilience to climate change 			
Landscape Enterprise Network	Other	Nestle, SEPA, 3keel	Environment Food & Rural Affairs Dept.	To link the management of land and landscapes to the long-term needs of business and society	Case-study dependent	Case-study dependent	yes
The Leven Programme	3	Multiple key partners	Multiple funding sources	Inclusive growth, achieving environmental excellence in ways that create social and economic opportunities	422km2	2018	no
Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park	1	Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority	Scottish Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance natural and cultural heritage • Promote sustainable use • Enhance visitors' experience • Promote sustainable economic and social development 	1865 km2	2002	yes
Peatlands Partnership	2	Peatlands Partnership	EU LIFE Programme and National Heritage Lottery Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore peatlands • Review the Peatland Management Strategy • Taking forward the listing of the Flow Country as a World Heritage Site 	>2000 km2	2006	yes
Pentland Hills Regional Park	1	Edinburgh Council	Local Authorities and Scottish Water	Guide and assist all stakeholders in the sustainable management of the park.	100 km2	1984	Yes
Strathard – a landscape to live, work and play	3	Community Partnership	Multiple funding sources	Foster relationships between agencies, visitors, landowners, businesses and community to jointly influence how land, forest and water is managed	260 km2	2015	Yes
Tweed Forum	2	The Tweed Forum	Multiple funding sources primarily Scottish Government, SNH, SEPA and Scottish Borders Council	Promote the sustainable use of the whole of the Tweed catchment through holistic and integrated management and planning	5000 km2	1991	Yes

Main findings

This section shows the results of the interviews conducted with some selected initiatives.

Type 1

Governance type 1 includes:

- the Cairngorms National Park
- the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park
- the Pentland Hills Regional Park

Table 2 shows a summary of the common strengths and weaknesses of this typology.

Table 2 Strengths and weaknesses of Type 1 initiatives

TYPE 1 - STRENGTHS	
Planning phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A lot of time and resources spent on planning the initiative
Implementation phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ability to coordinate different interests between land managers, visitors, farmers and others.● Open and transparent decision-making process
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Some board members are locally elected (within or separate from local authorities)● Regular board meetings
Budget/staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Core stable staff
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● High engagement with landowners as a legal requirement of their set-up and also partly due to the lack of land ownership and enforcement power
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Strong, direct engagement with local communities, both the people using the land and those benefiting from it (e.g. recreational value)● Grants or other mechanisms directed to communities to support their engagement with the parks

TYPE 1 - WEAKNESSES

Implementation phase

- Lack of land ownership and limited power to influence land use management
- Limited enforcement power (regarding wildlife crimes, littering etc.)

Governance

- Decision-making can be a slow and difficult process, lots of steps and formalities are required to move things forward

Budget/staff

- Budget and resources are thinly stretched

Community Engagement

- There may be mixed feelings within some communities regarding the role of National and Regional Parks, due to the requirement to balance a wide variety of different stakeholders e.g. visitor pressures, planning etc.

One of the main strengths common across Type 1 initiatives is their ability to act as mediators between different interests and objectives. This ability generally originates from (1) the wide range of skills represented within the board, (2) the capacity to generate peer pressure and (3) the limited land ownership. There are a few clarifications to be made. First, the skill set of the board is not necessarily planned and depends on the people that get elected. Second, the point on land ownership is slightly controversial as ownership can also be seen as a disadvantage: landowners can decide the fate of their own land, either following park standards or not. Both national and regional parks own little or no land. However, they have mentioned that the lack of ownership has allowed them to gain the legitimacy to act as a mediator and to build relationships of trust. All have stated that owning more land would compromise their role as facilitators.

We also found differences between specific initiatives, especially between the two National Parks and the Regional Park. National Parks, as executive non-departmental public bodies, benefit from a stable and reasonable governmental funding which allow them to maintain a relatively large staff and to leverage funds from other sources. On the other hand, the Pentland Hills Regional Park depends on Local Authority funding which, being smaller and less stable, forces the Regional Park to concentrate functions on a small number of employees – highly motivated but often unable to focus on project development and fundraising because they are tied in into maintenance work. Nevertheless, the Regional Park has greater freedom in their activities, especially since the funding does not come directly from the Scottish Natural Heritage as occurred in the past.

All parks suffer from visitors' pressure – negatively affecting the perception of local communities towards the official designations – but some are more affected than others (MacLellan and Strang, 2004; Phillip and Macmillan, 2006; SCNP and APRS, 2019). The proximity of the Pentland Hills Regional Park and the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park to highly populated urban areas makes them particularly vulnerable, especially during the current pandemics and the consequent need for urban green spaces. Their accessibility

positively affect their inclusiveness. The Regional Park especially, thanks to its location but also its focus on recreation and other land uses such as farming and forestry – is widely inclusive and attracts visitors from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Type 2

The governance type 2 includes:

- the Inner Forth Future (IFF) Initiative
- the Tweed Forum
- the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere
- the Peatlands Partnership.

Table 3 shows a summary of the common strengths and weaknesses of this typology.

Table 3 Strengths and weaknesses of Type 2 initiatives

TYPE 2 - STRENGTHS	
Planning phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of a wide range of projects that go beyond biodiversity conservation and focus on social and economic outcomes ● Integrated management approach
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partnership board representing a wide range of interests ● Establishment of a strong well-coordinated partnership that leads to long-term commitment ● Locally elected members within the partnership board ● Not being a statutory body means that the partnership can be more representative and operate as a trusted intermediary between government, landowners, farmers, communities and others ● Individual partners own some of the land where the partnership operates, facilitating small scale delivery on the ground
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong focus on "on the ground delivery" ● Streamlined, light on their feet, less baggage – more efficient delivery ● Elaboration of tools and frameworks that can be applied to different follow-up projects
Budget/staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can count on people’s goodwill and volunteers
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ability to articulate already existing good practices in land management ● Use of support network to share best practice and experiences with similar initiatives or other interested bodies (e.g. biosphere, peatland management forums) ● Role of trusted intermediary/honest broker
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Through well-structured engagement, initiatives have increased the awareness of a given landscape and its value as well as changed people's attitudes and understanding of the

landscape

- Initiatives create space for people to debate
- Employment and volunteering opportunities
- Work on community empowerment
- Communities can lobby their Local Authority's elected member

TYPE 2 - WEAKNESSES

Implementation

- Limited influence on land management decision making (except on land owned by partners)
- Challenging to maintain sustainability: continuation of projects and opportunities depend on limited funding and resources
- External factors that go beyond the control of the initiative strongly impact land use (CAP pricing, markets, subsidies, land ownership)

Budget/staff

- Finite initial project funding, continuation of funding/additional fundraising can be challenging and depends on partnership
- Dependence on people's goodwill and volunteers

Community Engagement

- Community engagement in some cases may represent only a snapshot of local people's opinion
- When agencies are actively involved, there might be tensions between them and the communities because of historical top-down approaches
- Specific projects that involve loss of farmland, deforestation, taking down buildings have strong opposition

All type 2 initiatives are well-established partnerships that have been successful in their first implementation stage leading to long-term commitment. They generally came about through collaboration among agencies which joined forces in a coordinated way and whose representatives have been dedicated and enthusiastic board members. Their success is often dependent on a strong leadership from the lead partner, *if any*. Partnerships often include locally elected members, which give them some sort of local legitimacy. However, most of these partnerships need to dedicate a lot of resources – especially in the planning phase – in order to get communities' buy-in. If agencies are actively involved, historical tensions between top-down approaches to land management and local communities hinder the trust building process (Braunholtz-Speight, 2015; MacKinnon, 2002). Some initiatives strive to gain the widest engagement possible and have also developed a structured engagement strategy. However, people often have polarized opinions and involving everybody in the decision-making process has proven to be a very difficult and slow process. Partnerships often struggle to find a balance between insufficient and non-representative engagement and a very intense one that – besides being very expensive in terms of time and resources – can easily lead to people's fatigue, especially when delivery on the ground comes late. Nevertheless, once a partnership has managed to overcome the initial barriers building trust and meeting people's

expectations, there is generally a high level of commitment and dedication from local communities. The dependence on people's goodwill and volunteers can be seen as both a strength and a weakness, as shown in Table 3. Though the lack of a formal remunerated agreement might hinder the commitment of some, it might also generate more ownership and encourage the continuity of good practices beyond the scope of a specific project.

Many Type 2 initiatives are funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund or other mechanisms. These funds are considerable but also have a clear termination date and are project specific and project based. Despite partners' effort and commitment, there is often a transition phase in which many activities freeze and new funds need to be raised. Reliance on Lottery Heritage Fund is not a sustainable way forward. Some initiatives have a core staff which remains operational during the transition phase. However, others do not and fundraising in a transition period is dependent on the time and resources of dedicated board members.

Overall, ensuring the long-term viability of these collaborative initiatives is often mentioned as one of the biggest challenges. Applying for formal designations, such as Biosphere or World Heritage Site, is one strategy to be viewed more favorably by conservation and heritage-based funding sources in order to facilitate continuity. However, even when a partnership has obtained an internationally renowned label, significant effort and resources must still be dedicated to fundraising.

Type 3

The governance type 3 includes:

- the Strathard Initiative
- the Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape

Due to the similarity between Type 2 and Type 3 initiatives and in order to avoid redundancy, we do not show the strengths and weaknesses table for Type 3. Instead, we highlight the most important aspects that differentiate Type 3 initiatives from Type 2.

Overall, Type 3 initiatives are quite recent compared to the other types and – probably because of this and their smaller scale – more project-focused. However, both partnerships that we investigated have shown a significant level of coordination amongst members and a general tendency to long-term commitment. Both initiatives operate at different scales: at a local scale which is meaningful for the communities and foster their engagement, and at a landscape scale which is appropriate for understanding and managing the ecological processes taking place. The landscape scale approach has proven particularly valuable when different agencies with different expertise join forces and coordinate actions. At the local level, both initiatives have thoroughly engaged with communities. For instance, the Living Landscape initiative has designed projects based on local people's needs and aspiration, going beyond purely biodiversity-focused projects. The Strathard Initiative has strived to involve more than the 'usual suspects' and to overcome issues that the community had in relation to working with agencies.

The continuity of type 3 initiatives is also hindered by a finite initial funding as well as other specific challenges. In the case of the Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape, the remoteness of

the area and the consequent lack of infrastructures and institutions that could facilitate the delivery of objectives have proven to represent a big undertaking for the leading partner. Because it is a sparsely populated area, the capacity of the local communities and their ability to properly engage is also limited. In the case of the Strathard Initiative, its location within the boundaries of the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park – which took over the coordination of the project – might lead to the merging of the initiative with the general activities of the park, losing its individuality but probably maintaining its activities.

Other

There are two more initiatives that have not been grouped in any typology due to their distinctiveness. Cairngorms Connect is a partnership among land managers with the common objective of reducing deer numbers to restore the habitat. This initiative has a few key differences with the others mentioned in this study:

1. The land is owned within the partnership and therefore the partners can easily act on their own land.
2. The initiative is privately funded.
3. The partnership is not a legal entity.
4. The objective is primarily landscape restoration and, even though restoration can provide long-term socio-economic benefits, there are no specific short-term benefits for local communities.

Because it is a partnership of the willing, partners are not obliged to comply with certain requirements and do not need approval of their land management decisions from the partnership. This also means that there is a smaller risk of reputation loss if one partner's decisions are perceived as wrong by other agencies or the public opinion.

Because of the nature of the partnership, local communities have not been particularly involved in the planning phase. This has caused some hostility, especially at the outset of the initiative. However, the limited engagement with the wider community and their diverse opinions about land management is regarded as one reason for the effective delivery on the ground – beyond the crucial fact that all land is owned within the partnership and the substantial funding.

The other initiative not included in the governance typology is a framework for linking businesses with their landscape dependencies. LENSs' overall objective is to create a self-sustaining network through which businesses acknowledge and support improved management of the landscape assets that are key to their future business performance. It is a quite novel approach that aims to be preventive instead of reactive, holding businesses responsible for the landscape that provides them with needed services. Because of its novelty, some businesses, especially smaller ones, are still quite hesitant in engaging. Blended finance

opportunities also already exist and LENS is willing to engage not only with businesses, but also with local authorities and charities.

Ideally, LENS relies upon already existing governance entities representative of a balanced range of voices from business, public sector and civil society. Such entities should also have the ability to influence and shape the overall strategy of a specific area and to commission activities. However, LENS can also operate in the absence of such entities through the establishment of a local LENS operator, with the added value of creating enterprise opportunities in areas where no appropriate organization exist yet.

What both initiatives have in common is the long-term focus. Cairngorms Connect has developed a 200 years vision to emphasize that the benefits of their project go well beyond the time scale of single individuals. On the other hand, LENS aims at shifting the attention from impact – something that is already happening – to risk – something that might happen in the future but that could be addressed and prevented in the present.

General opportunities and threats

Table 4 presents a synthesis of the key opportunities and threats perceived by the different initiatives. Because most opportunities and threats affect all initiatives regardless of their governance type, we grouped all of them together. There are few controversial points. For instance, official designation (e.g. UNESCO) are seen as an opportunity to attract more resources and funding but also as a threat when visitors' pressure increases and there are no infrastructures or mechanisms in place to keep it under control. Furthermore, the carbon market is perceived as a great opportunity to fund conservation activities but few initiatives have benefited from it yet⁵ and there is still limited knowledge of its implementation and implications.

⁵ See for example <https://tweedforum.org/tweed-forum-carbon-club/>

Table 4 Synthesis of opportunities and threats for all initiatives

	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Land Use Partnerships could provide a framework and mechanisms to support the different partnerships to have a greater influence on land management. • Agencies such as the Scottish Wildlife Trust are lobbying the government to enforce a more coherent and integrated approach for conservation activities. • The Covid-19 pandemic has shown the need of accessible green spaces, especially in urban areas but not exclusively. Politicians hopefully have captured that and will retain it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of regulation around rural land management: Land ownership is the ultimate authority. • Industrial forestry and agriculture are becoming more intense in several regions and they are still tied to compartmentalized approaches. • Forestry grant schemes are still biased toward commercial plantations and, because of technical, financial and bureaucratic requirements, mainly large landowners benefit from them.
Financial mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The voluntary carbon market could provide an alternative mechanism to fund environmental activities • Corporate social responsibility is increasing and businesses are becoming more aware of their connection with the landscape and the risks associated with mismanagement. They are increasingly open to get involved and contribute to fund conservation and restoration activities • Conservation and heritage-based funding sources want to see more coherence in plans for landscape scale conservation, linking with national objectives, and providing multiple benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small businesses are still hesitant in trusting new financial mechanisms, especially when they involve long-term commitment (such as those proposed by the LENs approach). • A lot of uncertainty around which incentives and financial mechanisms will be in place after Brexit. • There are high expectations regarding carbon market opportunities but limited understanding of its implementation and implications. • Land managers are driven by short-term economic pressures and their actions are heavily influenced by taxes, grants and subsidies.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies which have historically worked in silos, are learning to coordinate and collaborate effectively. • Some landowners and farmers are doing a lot to tackle climate change through improved land management. Agencies and initiatives need to capture their effort to share good practice and encourage others to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though more and more landowners are delivering conservation efforts, the model of affecting land use by convincing landowners is too dependent on individuals' goodwill and their present wealth. It has proven to be unsustainable when ownership changes (mainly through inheritance) and so do people's objectives and wealth.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing visitors' pressure and lack of mechanisms to enforce legislation from most initiatives might jeopardize the partnerships' effort in obtaining formal designations (e.g. National Park, World Heritage Site) because of local antagonism. • Though landscape scale projects are increasingly pushed forward, agencies and NGOs often lack the resources to manage such big and complex projects and tend to overstretch. • Lack of joined up delivery – outcomes such as habitat networks, pollination, natural flood management, etc. rely on a series of initiatives being connected in time and space to work.
Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's perceptions and awareness towards conservation and restoration are changing, especially with the new generations taking over. • Because of recent successful multi-benefits projects, the historically conflictual relationship between local communities and agencies has improved, facilitating collaboration and delivery. • Some concepts (such as Biosphere and other UNESCO designations) are still rather new and are not quite well understood by the public. With time and effort to raise awareness from the initiatives, the general public will understand their role and potential in addressing local land management issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite a general trend towards community-based approaches, communities often lack the capacity and/or coordination to take control over projects and initiatives. Due to historical reasons, this lack of capacity differs between different regions of Scotland. • Given current uncertainties about mechanisms and policies that will be in place after Brexit, farmers and other businesses prefer to wait rather than to implement land management actions to make sure they will benefit from the upcoming mechanisms and policies. • Community groups are generally as good as the people that are running them at that point in time. They often lack the long-term guarantee that more established and well-resourced initiatives can provide (e.g. National Parks). Landowners need that guarantee to trust and accept projects. • There is still a gap in perceptions: on one hand the general public feels that landowners and farmers need to do more to address climate change, on the other hand landowners and farmers feel cornered and under fire from the public opinion. This does not encourage them to change their practices on what ultimately is their land.

Recommendations for Regional Land Use Partnerships

All the initiatives explored within this report are well aware of the RLUPs and some of them have been directly involved with the Land Commission or with the Regional Land Use Framework pilots (Kirkup et al., 2016). Drawing from their expertise and experience, we have collated a series of recommendations regarding the role and functions of RLUPs.

1. All initiatives have expressed the need for a more formalized and coordinated framework to support land management, particularly in the current transition phase where mechanisms such as the EU agri-environmental schemes will need to be replaced. Particularly, they have called for a mechanism to help direct funding into projects that are managed on a regional scale and involve different stakeholders to support the delivery of multiple benefits, including climate change mitigation and adaptation. Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) could potentially cover this role. Some interviewees believe that if RLUPs would become the focus of all public money – from planning regulations to agri-environmental schemes and forestry – they could distribute funding in a much more thoughtful and coordinated way compared to present times. Others have suggested that RLUPs do not have to hold the whole budget but to formulate the framework against which the budget will be delivered. However, many have emphasized that RLUPs *“need the stick as well as the carrot”* and should have enforcement powers within their governance structure. Otherwise, there is the risk that they become an extra layer of bureaucracy without leading to any effective change on the ground.
2. To be able to cover the roles mentioned under point 1, RLUPs should be properly funded by the government and should not count on volunteering as many initiatives do in Scotland. The return on investment will be high but it will take time to come to fruition.
3. Most interviewees agreed that there is no one model for any one place and RLUPs should be flexible enough to adapt to different contexts with different land uses, histories and socio-economic structures.
4. Although all interviewees were happy to be involved in this research and asked to be kept informed of progress, some have expressed frustration regarding the slowness of the RLUPs process. Two pilot projects have already been run and evaluated, with the partnerships involved providing extensive feedback. Among them, the Tweed Forum pointed out that they already have in place the proper framework, tools and track record to be early adopters of RLUPs mechanisms.

Lessons learnt

Most of the interviewees have extensive experience of collaborative initiatives beyond the one they are currently involved with. Given the value of this knowledge, we asked them to share some of the lessons learnt across the years and the different initiatives they got to know.

Planning

- Investment in social capital is crucial, even if that might increase the time gap between planning and delivery on the ground.

- Initiatives work best when embedded in a high-level legal framework so that everybody is aware of the direction of travel.

Partnership

- Creating a successful partnership requires time and trust. All members need to feel responsible for the onward motion of the agreed project. It needs to be embedded into people's way of thinking. Because of this, it is important not only to get the right organization on board but also the right people within the organization.
- It requires core funding, not just project funding and leadership
- Compromise is key. People need to accept that the direction of travel might not always be where you wish to go, there are inevitable trade-offs.
- Senior managers decide how to allocate resources. They need to be sufficiently involved to understand what partners have agreed upon to be able to support these decisions with resources.
- People and staff change constantly. When there is a new person coming in, the vision and objectives agreed upon during the planning phase of an initiative should be revisited.
- People need to have a clear role within a partnership. They are not only representing their organization, but they should share the objectives and philosophy that have been discussed and agreed jointly as a partnership
- Some partnerships are fragile because they lack an integrated and holistic view across the landscape. They can obtain funds for individual projects but without a strategic approach they will likely not deliver.

Implementation

- For a successful engagement and delivery on the ground it is crucial to have a coordinator or a project manager.
- The real challenge is continuity. Partnerships should start thinking about the next steps well before a specific project ends. This would also help retain people and avoid excessive turnover.
- Path-dependency: successful projects and positive feedback are crucial to maintain the process and ensure its continuity.

Engagement

- Many agencies and NGOs are not staffed with people trained to work with people.
- Some communities are tired of agencies coming and telling them how to run their lives. They need to be involved in the planning phase and their input should be valued equally to that of the agencies.
- A flexible approach for community engagement is needed. Different communities have different needs and agencies need to understand how they can support an effective and meaningful engagement.
- Community engagement should be maintained over time, not only during the planning phase.

- Even if there is the willingness from the agencies, it is often difficult for communities to engage with certain processes (e.g. the design of a plan for a new forestry plantation). The window of time is often too short, the language too technical, and the community has limited capacity and support. We need to move away from the community engagement just being a tick box exercise.

Overall, this report synthesized some of the major strengths of existing collaborative initiatives within the Scottish land sector, while also emphasizing challenging aspects as well as the foreseen opportunities and threats that might affect their trajectory. Building on current initiatives and engaging with numerous highly experienced stakeholders, we aim to support the Land Commission in providing a sound foundation for the establishment of successful RLUPs.

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