

The potential for a Highland Land Use Strategy

Recommendations to Highland Environment Forum from discussion meeting held on 12th September 2014.

The meeting heard from:

Irina Birnie, Project Manager, Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy

James Davidson, Pilot Project Officer, Aberdeenshire Council

Zoe Kemp, Head of Land Use and Biodiversity Team

and was attended by representatives of: Crofting Commission, FCS, Highland Council, Home Energy Scotland, Changeworks, HEN, NFUS, RSPB, SEPA - Scottish Government: Rural Payments & Inspections Division, SNH, SLE

Recommendations

All attending the workshop agreed the following:

- that an approach that develops a cross- strategy, cross-sectoral approach would be useful to Highland land use planning.
- there should be an initial exercise to see what individual strategies (eg forestry, water, landscape, wind farm) already exist, how these complement one another or conflict and what gaps there are.
- that there is potential to look at key issues across Highland and to reach a consensus on these across land use sectors.
- to look at existing cross-sectoral land use planning in order to learn from their experience (eg Cairngorms National Park Authority, Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape, River Spey catchment management, Nevis Partnership, Sunart Initiative, Peatland Management Plan, Monaliadh deer management plan)
- to aim to reach a position (in a year-ish) where there is a clear view on what information and strategies already exist and what needs to be done to improve Highland land use planning.
- that the timescale for taking forward the proposed work within Highland would seem to fit well with the formal assessment of the Aberdeenshire and Borders pilots in March 2015 and the refresh of the Scottish Land Use Strategy.

The Highland Environment Forum members will be asked if they:

- support these recommendations
- support the establishment of a working group to take the recommendations forward.