



# Story Telling about Land Use and Land Use Change

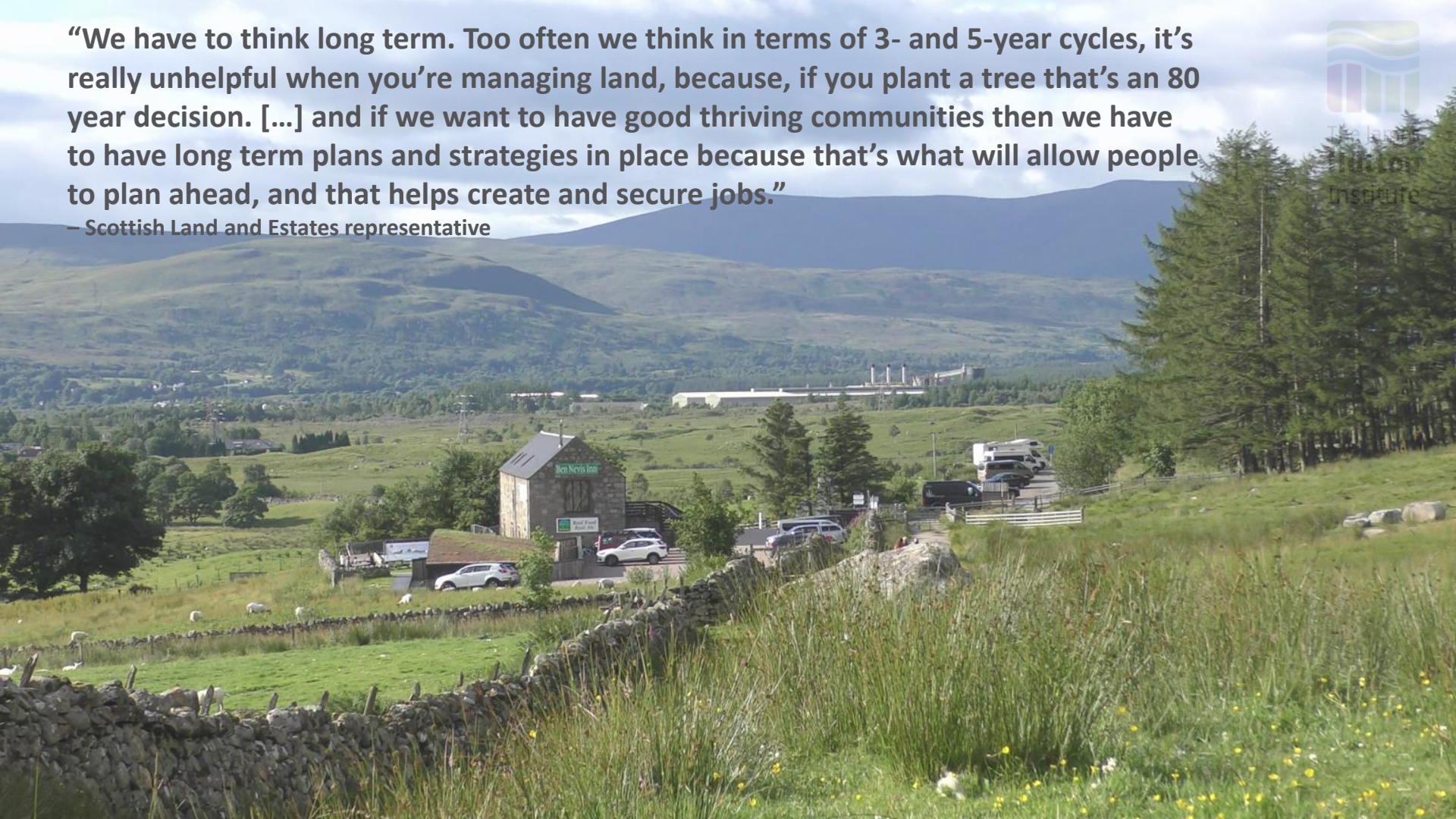


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Naomi Beingessner, Alba Juárez Bourke, Chloe Thompson  
End of Year 3 meeting with Scottish Government, 25 March 2025

**“We have to think long term. Too often we think in terms of 3- and 5-year cycles, it’s really unhelpful when you’re managing land, because, if you plant a tree that’s an 80 year decision. [...] and if we want to have good thriving communities then we have to have long term plans and strategies in place because that’s what will allow people to plan ahead, and that helps create and secure jobs.”**

**– Scottish Land and Estates representative**



# Research Purpose

- Research **aims**:
  - to identify a diverse set of voices which are weighing in on land-related issues in Scotland
  - to assess the visions of land futures that these voices present
- Research **questions**:
  - Whose voices are put forward in land sector governance consultations?
  - Which voices are missing from these consultation processes?
  - What vision of land futures do these voices present?
  - What undesirable land futures do these voices argue against?
  - What environmental and/or social justice issues are expressed in these responses?
  - On what grounds do consultation voices claim legitimacy?



# Hearing from ‘traditional’ stakeholders – process



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To answer the questions, we first engaged with data from a diverse set of ‘traditional’ stakeholders who frequently provide their perspectives on land use to the Scottish Government. We:

- Identified a set of 17 Scottish Government policy consultations related to land use and the 1007 distinct businesses and organisations responding to these. We selected 16 organisations to include a diverse set of organisational aims and type of organisation
  - M8 Purposive sample for story-telling finalised (Oct 2022)
- Conducted discourse analysis using Carvalho’s (2007) media analysis for coding framework; deductively coded 109 responses by organisations to the 17 consultations.
  - M9 Sensory and conventional interview analytical approach confirmed (Feb 2023)
  - M25: LU/LUC story telling draft findings fed into QST2 (Sep 2023)
- Interviewed representatives of 10 traditional stakeholder organisations to check accordance with their organisations’ views and goals, and to help focus the interviews to where there were gaps in our knowledge, and to views not covered in the sample of consultation responses (Birt et al. 2010) and integrated with analysis.
- Published ‘Visions for future land-use in Scotland’ [report](#) and [digital story](#) summary, August 2024
- Milestone report ‘LU/LUC story telling findings fed into QST3’, March 2025



	Support for Agriculture and the Rural Economy Post-Brexit 2018	National Council of Rural Advisers 2018	Rural Assets Strategy 2019	Good Food Nation 2019	Right to Buy Land to Further Sustainable Development 2019	Environmental Principles and Governance 2019	Scottish Crown Estate 2019	Forestry Strategy 2019-2029	Scotland's Economic Performance 2020	Review of Mental Health Law 2020	Just Transition Commission 2020	Climate Change Net Zero Nation 2021	Agricultural Transition in Scotland 2021	Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy	Environmental Standards Scotland 2022	Draft National Planning Framework 4 2022	Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement 2022
Community Land Scotland		*	*		*		*				*			*		*	*
Community Woodlands Association	*				*		*						*	*		*	*
CONFOR	*	*	*				*						*	*		*	*
Creative Scotland										*	*					*	
Highlands and Islands Enterprise					*		*	*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*
Historic Environment Scotland	*		*			*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
John Muir Trust		*					*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*
National Farmers Union					*	*				*	*	*	*	*			
Outside the Box		*		*							*						
Paths for All	*						*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Quakers in Scotland										*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Royal Town Planning Institute			*			*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Scottish Crofting Federation	*	*		*								*	*	*	*	*	*
Scottish Environment LINK	*			*		*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Scottish Land and Estates	*		*	*	*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*	*
Soil Association Scotland	*	*		*		*						*	*	*	*	*	*

## Findings:

- Organisations each identified multiple benefits from land: goods, both public and private.
- Narrow, sectoral views contrasted with broader, holistic views.
- Organisations often attribute the causes of environmental decline/pressures to other sectors and seek solutions that benefit their own.
- Social justice issues are raised by all organisations to a greater or lesser extent, with focuses on inclusion, equality, and access to food.
- There is a wide variety in appetite for speed and degree or extent of change.

Positive future visions agreed on by many stakeholders included:

- people and nature living together supportively;
- increased community agency, democratisation, and inclusion in decision making;
- increased and sustainable rural population; and
- sustainable agriculture.

Organisations have suggestions of how to reach their desired future:

- tailored financial support/incentives from government;
- relationships over regulation;
- support for capacity building;
- shared power; and
- change in understanding and behaviour.

Most stakeholders support taking a **holistic view of land use**, acknowledge the multiple functions of land, and **support land use change** to reach environmental and social goals. Differences are reflected in **prioritisation** of these issues and in future visions of land use in Scotland and how to get there. There is sometimes agreement within and across sectors that may be surprising. This suggests that there is a **need for stakeholders to come together** and listen to each other, potentially through a more participatory approach to policy design. Fostering dialogue between a wider range of different actors could lead to an **improved understanding of different perspectives** and to finding solutions that minimise or at least make the **most effective trade-offs**.

# Responses and further work



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- Engagement with Land Use and Agriculture Just Transition Plan team, discussing definition of just transition, holistic nature of just transition in rural lives, aspects of behavioural change; requests for further information
- Narrowed and deepened our analysis to focus on ‘just transition’ due to the salience of the topic in policy, and its significance in our data
- Drafted article “Scottish Stakeholder Visions of Rural Land Use Affecting Governance in a ‘Just Transition’”
  - Received feedback from other scholars, April 2024 Stockholm University workshop ‘Doing justice in the transition to climate neutrality: the discursive politics of European just transition governance’
- Presented at workshop ‘Researching land use futures in the context of just transitions’ at Ulster University Belfast, September 2024

## Digital Story



A “particularly useful communication device”  
– SG policy lead  
“a brilliant way to present your research”  
– community development officer

# Process – engaging with lesser-heard stakeholders



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This part of the research seeks the perspectives of lesser-heard voices on land use change, aiming to identify people, perspectives and narratives about possible futures of land use in Scotland that are currently missing or marginalised in traditional stakeholder discourse and government policy.

- Determined methodological approach to research: walking interviews with video
  - M9 Sensory and conventional interview analytical approach confirmed (Feb 2023)
- Using expansive definition of stakeholder: “an actor involved in, affected by, knowledgeable of, or having relevant expertise or experience on the issue at stake” (Cuppen et al., 2010, p. 579)
  - “Heterogeneous groups in general produce higher quality decisions [...] as they show more divergent thinking, consider multiple perspectives, and share more unique information than homogeneous groups do” and “marginal viewpoints (or rarely mentioned hypotheses) are more likely to provide new insights than dominant viewpoints” (Cuppen et al., 2010, p. 580).
- Inverted our list of consultation responses to identify infrequent stakeholder types and supplemented the list with techniques that Colvin et al. call an ‘art’ (e.g. intuition and past experiences) and a ‘science’ (e.g. use of media, key informants and snowballing)
  - Potential participants include youth, landworkers, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+, Gaelic people, foragers, and artisans
- Received JHI Ethics and RESAS SRA approval, began recruitment (March 2025)

# References

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