



# Alternative Land-Use Narratives



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# 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** (Years 4-5 research is focused on the four middle 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?



# Previously, in C3....

- At an earlier stage in the research, we analysed the responses to a selection of **17 Scottish Government land use-related consultations** submitted by **16 organisations** reflecting a wide array of land-related interests, and these stakeholders were then interviewed.
- We published both a **technical report** '[Visions for future land-use in Scotland](#)' and an accompanying [digital story](#) in August 2024.
- In 2025, we **re-sampled consultations** from late 2022 to May 2025, shortlisting 12 consultations to analyse the stakeholder responses over time to explore the extent of change in visions of land use futures, priorities, and concerns (Milestone 40).

Consultation	Related previously-studied Consultations	No. of sample organisation responses
Land Reform in a Net Zero Nation (2022)	Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, Right to Buy Land to Further Sustainable Development	12
Delivering our Vision for Scottish Agriculture. Proposals for a new Agriculture Bill (2022)	Support for Agriculture and the Rural Economy Post-Brexit, Good Food Nation, Agricultural Transition in Scotland, Draft National Planning Framework 4	10
Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (2022)	Forestry Strategy 2019-2029	9
A Human Rights Bill for Scotland (2023)	n/a	9
Community Wealth Building (2023)	Draft National Planning Framework 4, community-wealth building mentioned in previous consultation responses	8
Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)	Just Transition Commission	5
New National Parks Appraisal Framework (2023)	Refers to Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	7
Crofting Consultation (2024)	n/a	7
Scotland's draft Circular Economy and Waste Route Map to 2030 (2024)	Good Food Nation, Climate Change Net Zero Nation	6
National Good Food Nation Plan (2024)	Good Food Nation	4
Draft Bioenergy Policy Statement: Consultation (2024)	Refers to Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan	4
Flood Resilience Strategy: consultation (2024)	Draft National Planning Framework 4	4

# Initial process – Engaging with less-heard stakeholders

This part of the research **sought the perspectives of less-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 in a rural location that is meaningful to the participant
- Videos provide rich, contextually grounded data and engaging outputs
- Used 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. (2016) call an ‘art’ (e.g. intuition and past experiences) and a ‘science’ (e.g. use of media, key informants and snowballing)
  - Potential participants groups included youth, landworkers, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ people, foragers, and artisans
- Began recruitment and interviews (March 2025)

# Data collection

- We conducted **9 video interviews** (with 9 participants) between July 2024 and November 2025, across various locations: the Highlands, Aberdeen, the Inner Hebrides (Argyle and Bute), and Aberdeenshire
  - Outdoor *in situ* interviews allow the sensory qualities of the environment, often imbued with personal meaning and memory, to actively shape participants' narratives, contributing to **richer and more holistic data**. This method also positions **participants as experts on place** and experience, and fosters a more relaxed interview atmosphere (Robinson & McClelland, 2020).
- Interviews asked about:
  - Participants' **experience** of the countryside
  - **Desired changes** to and **concerns** about the Scottish countryside in the future
  - **Factors that influence or constrain** how they use or interact with the countryside

# Reflections on less-heard voices recruitment

Recruitment began with attempts to make participation **more accessible and less intimidating**: attending events held by groups to make initial personal connections, including honoraria for participants, and providing multiple options for ensuring confidentiality or anonymity at participants' choice

We **identified preliminary themes** from the data and focused on these, incorporating **snowball sampling** through professional and recreational networks to recruit a further 6 participants to the study

May 2024

March 2025

June 2025

With only 3 participants interviewed, to increase recruitment we **redrafted participant materials** to be more accessible and made the **video aspect of the interview optional**

Recruitment presented several challenges arising from the scope of the study, the nature of the methods, and broader ethical considerations. Factors that may have contributed to difficulties in engaging potential participants include:

- Participants may have felt **uncertain about the aims** of the study
- Limited familiarity with academic research practices and the **perceived demands of participation methods**, including filming and outdoor settings, may have influenced whether participation felt feasible or desirable
- There were **concerns around participant fatigue** within certain networks
- It was not appropriate to directly target individuals on the basis of protected characteristics, **limiting the ability to proactively recruit participants** from groups that are often underrepresented in outdoor research



# Draft plans for Year 5



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- Video production
  - Data analysis
  - Creating a script and editing the film footage into 3-4 short videos.
  - Organising a film screening and online access
- Publishing a shorter methodological piece with our reflections on our experiences with recruiting less-heard voices
- Using the video interview data along with the consultation data in the final deliverable (D14), a journal paper on evolving stories and different voices influencing land use/land use change, due February 2027

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