

Looking Forward: Shaping the Future of England's Uplands

Summary of the Common Ground from our 2016-17 Workshops¹

The Uplands Alliance is England's leading network of organisations looking to shape a better future for England's Uplands. In 2016/17 we carried out the country's most detailed consultation directly with stakeholders to obtain the most accurate picture of the issues and opportunities the English uplands face. This has been brought together here in this summary.

Over 300 people attended our workshops held in London, Cumbria, Shropshire and Exeter. Separate reports were produced for each event and these are available on our website. Here the findings are collated around the five topics of:

- Uplands Policy
- Communication
- Role of Farming
- Future Schemes
- Training and Learning

Uplands Policy

The two themes that arose in all four workshops were:

1. Public money to be focused on delivering and enhancing public benefits
2. Integrate land management with the needs of businesses and communities

A theme that arose in three of the workshops is that while farming is the predominate form of land management currently covering 70% of the uplands it is not the only type of land management. Forestry, water provision, sporting and conservation interests are also important land uses. Adopting a landscape scale approach was also considered important.

Communication

All workshops recognised an urgent need to increase awareness of the benefits that the uplands provide to society and how active management is critical to maintain and enhance these benefits. Awareness is needed among a range of audiences included the general public, visitors to the uplands, local residents, as well as policy makers and politicians.

Furthermore the Uplands are too often perceived as a contested area with many different and opposing views on how the uplands should be managed. There are differences of view but the workshops exposed substantial common ground between diverse stakeholders, particularly when stakeholders worked in small groups to develop a shared position.

¹ More details on the workshops can be found at www.uplandsalliance.com

Role of Farming

By area, farming currently occupies over 70% of England's uplands. It was noted at all workshops that we must recognise the role of livestock farming in shaping the uplands. At three workshops the explicit need to engage and empower farmers to better deliver public benefits was expressed.

At the last workshop the need to consider the management of common land in relation to enclosed land of individual farmers was strongly made. This illustrates the wider point that individual landowners and farmers understandably see management from the perspective of their businesses. This needs to be recognised if we are going to successfully deliver at a landscape scale. Good public policy and well designed incentives can help farmers to develop successful productive businesses in a way that also delivers high public benefit.

Future Schemes

Three points arose at all three workshops regarding the design of future schemes:

1. Support for a programme available to all England's uplands
2. Schemes should incorporate and respect local distinctiveness
3. An emphasis on delivering outcomes rather than prescribing actions

Other points that occurred in at least two of the workshops were the need to empower farmers to deliver environmental outcomes as part of their enterprise, that scheme administration should be simpler and pay promptly and that payment rates should reflect activity, costs and outcomes.

Training & Learning

All four workshops recognised the need to improve our evidence base and monitor change to demonstrate and optimise the delivery of public benefits. Furthermore in three workshops the need to enhance the skills of farmers, advisors, agencies and NGOs was recognised as was the benefit of farmer2farmers knowledge transfer to improve practice and outcomes.

Proposed Actions

On the basis of these findings the Uplands Alliance Steering Group will undertake the following actions through its project *Creating a Brighter Future* funded by the Prince's Countryside Fund:

1. Further dialogue with Ministers and senior civil servants
2. Develop an Engagement Plan
3. Agree a Concord on the Uplands
4. Hold a Parliamentary Event
5. Reach out to 1300 hill farmers through knowledge transfer events and publicity
6. Produce effective and powerful communication tools on the value of the uplands for different audiences
7. Identify and support 30 'young' champions active in upland management
8. Work with academics to ensure research programmes deliver positive impact supporting a better future for England's uplands