

## **The Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Pilot**

### **Summary of the Land Use Change Issues and Opportunities for Aberdeenshire**

This is a summary of the report 'Land Use Change Issues and Opportunities for Aberdeenshire' produced as part of the Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Pilot. The report is available at <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/energy/AberdeenshireLandUseStrategyPilot.asp>

Between March 2013 and March 2015, Aberdeenshire Council and the James Hutton Institute delivered a Land Use Strategy Pilot. The Pilot formed part of a package of work supporting and embedding the Scottish [Land Use Strategy](#); it covered the Aberdeenshire local authority area and focused on issues related to land use change. Time and resources available meant that the Pilot could not be a full exploration of every relevant issue in the region, so the focus was on five key land use and environment related policy themes. The boxes below highlight these themes and key messages to emerge under each:

#### **The Low Carbon Economy:**

- Land based businesses in Aberdeenshire should plan more fully for climate change, considering options for both mitigation and adaptation.
- The restoration of lowland raised bogs in Aberdeenshire requires greater attention.
- Further opportunities for larger scale onshore wind energy developments in Aberdeenshire may be limited; a greater diversity of generation is required.
- A strategic approach to woodland planting, taking greater account of constraints and opportunities, is likely to support further expansion and deliver multiple benefits.

#### **Sustainable Food Production:**

- Regimes which support and subsidise agriculture should target overall public benefit and allow for regional/local targeting.
- There needs to be better business planning in agriculture in Aberdeenshire for both mitigation of and adaption to future climate change.

#### **Sustainable Water Management:**

- An integrated catchment management approach could provide the framework from which to build a more integrated approach to land and water use.

#### **Halting Biodiversity Loss:**

- The value of biodiversity should be accounted for in decision making.
- Land managers need advice and support on biodiversity issues.
- Habitat connectivity maps are one potential tool to aid strategic planning.

#### **Communities Connected to the Land:**

- A discussion on the potential for regional or local fora which can input to relevant land use planning activities is suggested.
- A strategic approach to the provision of recreation access is likely to have multiple benefits.

## Suggested Actions

Below, a series of suggested regional actions are set out, based on the experience and work of the Pilot. As the Pilot was not all-encompassing, these are some of the key actions that could be taken forward to further an integrated rural land use planning approach rather than an exhaustive list. Priority RA1 can be considered over-arching, with those below supporting its achievement. Further details on these actions can be found in the full report.

**RA 1:** *Explore a more integrated and inclusive approach to rural land use planning which better takes account of, and protects long term, the goods and services provided to all sectors of society by the natural environment.*

**RA 2:** *Ensure the potential effects of climate change on rural land use are given greater attention.*

**RA 3:** *Explore the scope for, and implications of expanding woodland in Aberdeenshire.*

**RA 4:** *Explore the provision of direct, local, on-the-ground advice for land managers.*

**RA 5:** *Continue work to understand and, where appropriate, map the natural assets and benefits delivered by Aberdeenshire's environment.*

The five actions set out above are focused on the Aberdeenshire region. The work of the Pilot and feedback from stakeholders also highlighted activities that should be given greater consideration at national level:

**NA 1:** *Explore a national assessment of land use opportunities and constraints*

**NA 2:** *There should be a greater focus on the reduction of total carbon dioxide emissions resulting from food production.*

## What next?

The work of the Aberdeenshire Pilot should be seen as a part of the journey towards realising the goals of the Land Use Strategy. There will be a national debate on how to take this approach forward, and the 2016 revision of the Land Use Strategy will set out the Government's position and recommendations. However, Aberdeenshire Council are committed to facilitating that debate in the region in the short term. The future direction the process goes in Aberdeenshire is up to all those who get involved. Feedback and comment on the key messages and actions set out above is encouraged. Expressions of interest in involvement from individuals and organisations are particularly welcomed.

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