

# **Cambrian Mountains Ecosystem Services Public Dialogue Process**

## **Project Evaluation**

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## Executive summary

- This report summarises the findings of the evaluation of the Cambrian Mountains ecosystem services dialogue process, which took place late winter 2013. Led by the Cambrian Mountains Initiative, and funded by Sciencewise, the process sought to create wide ranging discussions around the possible implementation of Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes. The evaluation has been completed by Icarus.
- Catrin Ellis Associates and Land Use Consultants delivered the project. Six focus groups were held with community members both in the Cambrian Mountains and in the downstream communities of Monmouth and Shrewsbury, including two events specifically for farmers and graziers. A final workshop was held with expert stakeholders from a wider range of organisations including the Welsh Government, Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales, farming trade unions and the National Trust.
- The dialogue process used four topic areas relevant to ecosystem services as a focus for the deliberations: food from farming; drinking water; flood control; climate regulation. Three scenarios were considered for each topic: business as usual; positive planned; negative unexpected.
- Small groups and an informal atmosphere, coupled with good props and clear information, were important elements in enabling the public / lay participants to discuss complex, technical issues, and provide valuable insights into their perspectives.
- The Cambrian Mountains Dialogue Project has been a well-received piece of work; professionally designed and facilitated with participants feeling it was a worthwhile use of their time and energy. People felt able to contribute, learning was good and the public / lay stakeholders were able to discuss complex issues and communicate their views to a forum of EGS policy specialists and technical experts.
- There is agreement that the way forward has to be collaborative with policy makers, technical experts, producers and consumers contributing to and realising a vision for how and why land in the Cambrian Mountains should be managed for the benefit of all. Having built understanding, established some significant degree of common direction and created a momentum, it will be particularly important to keep stakeholders informed and involved, particularly land managers and farmers.
- The dialogue process participants now want to see the project move swiftly into an action phase where the findings of this process and the connections and relationships developed are used to inform the establishment of Ecosystem Goods and Services initiatives.

- At an organisational level there is willingness across public, private and voluntary sectors to support CCW in this transition from dialogue and research into projects on the ground. Many participants fed back that the next stage of EGS development had to be through pilot initiatives where challenges such as combining ecological, social and economic outputs are worked through, markets for EGS are explored and it is possible to achieve learning through doing.
- There is a clear policy dimension that needs to be put in place to provide both the regulatory and resourcing capacity for EGS initiatives to succeed. The development of the new Rural Development Plan for Wales (RDP) is a major opportunity for the realisation of EGS goals. It is currently in the consultation stage and both the Welsh Government team working on the RDP and stakeholders to the process agree that this opportunity must not be missed. CCW (and NRW beyond 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013) are charged with drawing on the momentum and findings of the dialogue process and to work with others to ensure that the new RDP is equipped to support EGS goals.

## 1. Overview of the project and the approach to evaluation

This report sets out the key learning points and related evidence from the evaluation of the Cambrian Mountains Initiative dialogue project: Landscape and Ecosystems Futures and Perceptions in the Cambrian Mountains (given the delivery name of ‘The Natural Wealth of the Cambrian Mountains’).

### 1.1 Background to the dialogue process

The purpose of this dialogue process was *“to undertake a wide ranging discussion that will seek to understand the obstacles in the way of the development of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes or similar market instruments in the Cambrians, and through understanding the nature of those constraints, suggest ways to overcome them”*<sup>1</sup>. The project was co-funded by the Countryside Council of Wales (CCW) and Sciencewise<sup>2</sup>.

The dialogue process built on work undertaken by the Cambrian Mountains Initiative (CMI) over the past two years around ecosystem goods and services. In 2010 the CMI developed a Defra funded Adaptive Landscapes project that looked at the development of a discussion tool for mapping locations where climate change mitigation measures could be most effective once existing / competing land uses were taken into account. A Sciencewise project called ‘Dyfodol y Cambria’ followed, with dialogue focused on engaging community and land management stakeholders on the question of ecosystem services. More recent research has developed this thinking further, looking at the potential value that could be gained from enhanced land use and management, primarily in relation to soil carbon and water storage, quality and flood management. It also looked at examples of PES schemes elsewhere in the UK and identified the potential for a carbon accreditation scheme and the scope for links with large companies via the Corporate Social Responsibility route and with water companies in ownership of holdings in the Cambrian Mountains.

The CMI was set up in 2007-2008 to establish a rural focused sustainable development pilot in the Cambrian Mountains, with a goal to build a prosperous economic future for its communities based on their inter relationship with the landscape. It is made up of a broad partnership of bodies including the area’s three local authorities, Welsh Government, Environment Agency, National Trust, CCW, a number of the Prince of Wales’ charities, plus private and voluntary sector organisations. The current work

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from CCW Contract Technical Specification

<sup>2</sup> Sciencewise (Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre for Public Dialogue in Science and Innovation) was funded by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. It provides advice and funding to help policy makers commission and use public dialogue to inform policy decisions involving science and technology issues. For more information see [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk)

streams are: produce marketing, ecosystems, tourism, and built environment, heritage and communities.

## 1.2 The ecosystem approach

The ecosystem approach was originally introduced by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to link biodiversity goals to the wider concerns of Local Agenda 21 (agreed at the Earth Summit, 1992). It is defined by the CBD as “*a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way*”. The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 mentions the ecosystem approach in relation to the management of biodiversity, fisheries and tourism.

The ecosystem approach is based on twelve principles, which have been summarised by Scottish Natural Heritage as follows:

- Take account of how ecosystems work (e.g. consider the broad scale as well as the local, the long term as well as the immediate).
- Take account of the services that ecosystems provide to people, including those that underpin social and economic well-being.
- Involve the participation of those who benefit from the ecosystem services.

The principles can be applied to specific environmental policy issues such as fisheries or forestry; for example, the Water Framework Directive follows many of the principles of an ecosystem approach due to its focus on river catchments as environmental systems, together with the strong public participation dimension to river basin management planning.

In the UK, Defra has adopted ‘an ecosystems approach’ as a guide to policy development. It has a particular focus on ensuring that the value of ecosystem services is fully reflected in policy and decision-making in Defra and across Government. Within the Welsh Government, ecosystem services have been a feature of the 2012 Natural Environment Framework Green Paper. A March 2013 Cabinet re-shuffle has seen a significant step towards a more integrated approach to land management with the creation of a Minister for Natural Resources and Food, combining two existing portfolios of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with that for the Environment which included climate change, flood prevention and the establishment of Natural Resources Wales (NRW)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> NRW is operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. It is formed from a merger of CCW, Environment Agency Wales and Forestry Commission Wales.

### 1.3 Ecosystem services

Ecosystem services are the **resources** and **processes** that ecosystems provide for human well-being. They can be classified as follows<sup>4</sup>:

Category	Description	Examples
Provisioning services	<i>The products obtained from ecosystems.</i>	Food, fibre, fresh water
Regulating services	<i>The benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes.</i>	Seed dispersal, pollination
Supporting services	<i>Ecosystem services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services.</i>	Soil formation and retention, nutrient cycling
Cultural services	<i>The non-material benefits people obtain from ecosystems.</i>	Cognitive development, recreation, aesthetic experience

While the idea of ecosystem services originated before the ecosystem approach, it has been incorporated into the ecosystem approach as a way of describing the way in which the natural environment underpins human well-being. Following its use in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the notion of ecosystem services is now a focus in its own right.

Valuation of ecosystem services is now an emerging topic. Participatory and deliberative techniques can be used to identify monetary and non-monetary values. There are concerns about how these values may be regarded by decision makers and the risk that ecosystem service assessment could be biased toward services that are easily quantifiable. It is within this context that the Cambrian Mountains dialogue project was developed (see below).

### 1.4 About this project

There were four key objectives to this dialogue project:

- To inform and secure understanding and buy in to the suggested ecosystems approach of the Natural Environment Framework / Living Wales, through the development of a number of Ecosystem Goods and Services (EGS) proposals for the Cambrian Mountains.

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<sup>4</sup> For further information see [www.ecosystems-services.org.uk](http://www.ecosystems-services.org.uk)

- To gain an understanding of the public perception to the EGS proposals, both within and without the study area, and how the challenges and opportunities of the ecosystems approach are linked to external social and economic factors.
- To develop a visual representation of the interconnectivity of stakeholder perception in regard to EGS opportunities that can inform / influence the development of policy designed to deliver the ecosystems approach.
- To create discussion around the potential incentives / market mechanisms required to deliver an EGS approach to land management in the Cambrian Mountains.

Catrin Ellis Associates (engagement specialists) and Land Use Consultants (land use and resource planning, ecology and integrated rural development specialists) delivered the dialogue process. It included the following elements:

- On street surveys with downstream communities (Monmouth and Shrewsbury) to both gather data on general attitudes towards the value people ascribe to nature's contribution to our lives, raise awareness of the study and the CMI, and primarily as a means of recruiting a wide cross section of participants. Focussing a proportion of the survey questions on the locally relevant theme of flooding was intended to capture people's interest.
- 2 focus groups with downstream communities in Monmouth and in Shrewsbury.
- 2 focus groups with Cambrian Mountain farmers and graziers.
- 3 focus groups with Cambrian Mountain communities.
- 1 workshop with land management experts.

At each event participants looked at four topic areas relevant to ecosystem services: food from farming, drinking water, flood control and climate regulation. The focus groups were 2.25 hours in length, locally based and held in the evenings. Participants for the Monmouth and Shrewsbury focus groups were recruited from the on street surveys, and subsequent phone calls. Participants for the other focus groups were recruited via local schools and CMI contacts.

The final workshop was a day-long event and invitations were extended to the contacts provided by the project Steering Group. The content replicated that of the focus groups (examining scenarios for the four topic areas [see section 2.3 below]), and also included an opportunity for participants to see how their results compared to those from the focus groups. Bringing these two sets of data, those present considered how to move the question of ecosystem goods and services forward in the Cambrian Mountains via specific actions.



## 1.5 The approach to evaluation

The evaluation aims to provide an independent assessment of the credibility, effectiveness and success of the dialogue process against its deliverables and objectives, including an assessment of impacts on policy and those involved. Focusing on the requirement to look primarily at the lessons from and impacts of the dialogue, the learning and evidence set out in the report has been drawn from the collation and analysis of data from the following sources:

- Feedback forms completed by focus group participants (42 forms in total).
- Feedback forms completed by the expert stakeholder workshop participants (19 forms in total).
- Observation of the expert stakeholder workshop.
- Follow up interviews with 12 expert stakeholder workshop participants.
- Interviews with the dialogue process facilitator and the CCW Cambrian Mountains Project Officer.

An evaluation framework was developed and agreed with CCW and Sciencewise. This reflected the evaluation brief and its seven key evaluation questions. The framework has provided the terms of reference for and has closely guided and structured the evaluative questioning of the feedback forms, the stakeholder interviews and observation of the expert stakeholder workshop (see appendix 1).

It should be noted that there has been a significant constraint on the effective evaluation of this dialogue process. The project had a very short delivery timescale, and events were scheduled late into this period. As a result, the scope to follow up participants to establish the impact of the process has been very limited. The evaluation has instead explored participants' views about the degree to which they believe the process has the *potential* to create an impact.

## 1.6 How this report is structured

This report is structured to reflect the key areas of the evaluation framework, as follows:

- The design and delivery of the dialogue process.
- The impact and outcomes of the dialogue process.

The themes are broken down into individual topic areas. Within each of the topic areas the key learning points are set out in the shaded boxes to provide an overview of the findings. The evidence base that informs the learning, including commentary drawn from the feedback forms, interviews and the workshop observation, and direct quotes from the dialogue participants, is also included. The final section of the report summarises the evaluation conclusions.

## 2. The design and delivery of the dialogue process

The learning below reviews the effectiveness of the process design and delivery in terms of engaging the public and expert stakeholders in productive dialogue to achieve the project aim and objectives.

Findings are organised under the following themes:

- Resourcing the dialogue process.
- Delivering a process that enables everyone to contribute.
- The choice of delivery methods.
- Insights into varied perspectives.

### 2.1 Resourcing the dialogue process

This project was challenging in terms of its timescale. A great deal of engagement work and dialogue was completed over a very short period of time, and there was a very quick turnaround between the final focus group and the expert workshop. This was a result of it taking some time to set the project up and commission contractors, and consequently limiting the amount of time for delivery. More time in this period would have allowed more scope for the facilitators to reflect on the results further to provide more focused feedback.

It is positive that neither the lay or expert participants have questioned whether their time was used effectively. The option of more time could however have provided more opportunities for capacity building and maximising the learning both for participants and from the process overall. It could also have allowed for time to bring the lay and expert participants together.

Given the time constraints however, the process did generate a considerable amount of data against the four project objectives (see 1.4 above). It has been argued that it generated more information than has been used and that there is a need to think about how to address this.

#### Learning points

- A **longer project timescale** would have resulted in more focused reflection and learning from the evidence captured through the process, as well as for capacity building.
- Overall those taking part in the process have not questioned whether this was a good use of their time. There is a sense that they are satisfied that their contribution was an **effective use of them as a resource** to the project.

- There is a need to consider how to **filter, analyse, collate and reflect on all the evidence** that has been generated by the dialogue process.

## 2.2 Delivering a process that enabled everyone to contribute

In a dialogue process like this, it is of paramount importance that the lay participants particularly feel that they have been able to contribute their perspectives on what are quite complex and technical issues. From the feedback it is very clear that this has been the case: over 90% of the focus group participants feel they were able to join in discussions and take part as much as they wanted to. The majority are clear that the small group size was helpful in enabling good discussion, coupled with good facilitation and an informal atmosphere: *“well facilitated and everyone had the chance to speak”* (focus group participant).

The facilitator was also successful in presenting the four topics in a way that over 75% of the focus group participants understood and therefore discuss. This was because they felt the topics were explained well and the props (photographs) and information were helpful. For some participants it helped that they had an existing understanding of or expertise in one or more of the topic areas – this is not surprising given that they were a self selected group and likely to have some degree of existing interest in the subject.

In the case of the expert stakeholder workshop, nearly 95% of the participants said they were able to contribute their views as much as they wanted to. They valued the small group working and the opportunity to discuss the topic areas with others, often finding it interesting to hear the perspectives of experts from disciplines different to their own: *“listening to what others have to say is equally valuable and that was an important part of the day for me”* (expert workshop participant).

Giving this kind of dedicated time to focused debate felt useful in terms of both understanding the range of perspectives and expertise participants brought to the workshop and further un-picking the concept of ecosystem services, as well as providing a beneficial networking opportunity. *“It was good to work in a focused way with colleagues”; “just bringing people together was energising”* (expert workshop participants).

The fact that there were no representatives from Dwr Cymru (Welsh Water) or utility companies present was a major drawback for a couple of expert participants who felt that the debate around EGS for the Cambrians cannot move forward without the involvement of the companies who may ultimately have to pay for the services that farmers deliver on their behalf.

## Learning points

- **Small groups and an informal atmosphere** are important for providing an environment that lay people feel comfortable in, enabling them to participate fully.
- The **facilitator of community based groups** needs to have experience of working with this audience, particularly with regard to designing processes that can easily unpick complex issues, ensure they are not addressed in a way that is unhelpfully superficial and can provide valuable results / outputs.
- The workshop provided the experts with a **valuable and focused opportunity** to discuss issues in depth, hear the perspectives of a range of different disciplines and have broad based conversations on ecosystems goods and services topics, in a way that is rarely otherwise possible.
- How to **engage Dwr Cymru (Welsh Water) and utility companies** on the debate around ecosystem goods and services requires some attention. There is a need to consider the best stage for engaging them, how they can or should participate in the dialogue, and what 'hooks' there might be for doing so.

### 2.3 The choice of delivery methods

Overall, the attention paid to how both the focus groups and the expert workshop were run, proved successful: each set of participants was able to participate effectively in the dialogue process and have provided valuable data as a result.

The focus group participants valued the use of visual materials as prompts for the scenario exercise, coupled with good and clear information. Consequently, they were able to absorb and comment intelligently on the same topics in the same way as the experts were asked to, creating a *"genuine dialogue"* (focus group facilitator).

The format for the expert workshop presented a particular set of challenges for the facilitators; they had to gather these participants' perspectives, assimilate those with the focus group findings, and then present back the combined results. This process was generally felt to work and indeed was described by one participant as *"impressive"*. For some however aspects of the information presented were too complex to process quickly, and there was little time for questioning and discussion. It was also the case that the short timescale meant that there was no scope for focus group participants to influence how their evidence was presented to the expert workshop participants.

A number of the expert participants found the exercise to consider three scenarios (business as usual, positive planned, negative unexpected) for each topic area particularly interesting. For example: *"it helped us think more laterally about what the*

*future might hold” (expert workshop participant).* For other experts however there was not enough time available to discuss each scenario in depth, and the requirement to complete a worksheet for each topic distracted from the opportunity to engage in deliberative conversation with others on their table. There was also some discussion about the wording used to describe the scenarios, whether describing them as ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ outcomes led people to consider them in prescribed ways.

A few people also felt that the final – and arguably most important – section on identifying potential actions was too rushed. There was not enough time for detailed discussion and the results between tables were not fully shared.

The subject generating most comments about the workshop format revolved around where people were sitting. Some participants would have preferred to move table each exercise; others would have liked to sit with other people from similar disciplines so they could engage in detailed debate; some liked being on a ‘mixed’ table where they could hear perspectives from a range of disciplines; some found it useful to sit with people they know; others would have liked more opportunity to meet new contacts and network more. It is also the case that copies of a delegate list and clear name badges would have helped people to network.

### Learning points

- Methods that enable participants to **visualise future scenarios** are particularly useful for lay people particularly. The use of the future scenario photo montages were valued by the focus group participants.
- Facilitated small group work enables **productive conversations** and ensures good levels of participation.
- Good session design has meant that non-experts – lay people – have been able to **contribute** their views on complex and technical subjects.
- It adds value to the process if **lay participants have the opportunity to influence** how their contributions are presented to an expert audience.
- **Sufficient time** is required within sessions to allow participants to give adequate consideration to each task. **Table facilitators** can help clarify the tasks and the relative priority of different sub tasks.
- How participants interact during a session requires consideration. A key question is how different kinds of **people can work together to best effect**, and how the best kind of synergy is achieved through the configuration of small work groups.

- Copies of the **delegate list** should be made available, and **clear name / organisation badges** provided, to enable people to network and make the most of the considerable assets / resources in the room.
- There need to be clear messages for participants about **what happens next** and how the findings of the dialogue process will be used, and by whom.

## 2.4 Insights into varied perspectives

A core purpose of a dialogue process like this is to gain insight into the range of perspectives on the ecosystems approach and ecosystem goods and services.

The process has enabled lay people to consider complex technical issues, and to give their perspective on ecosystem goods and services, and it is the case that all but one participant at the expert workshop feels that they now have a good understanding of lay perspectives: *“only by seeing and considering stakeholders’ perspectives will a workable solution be found”* (expert workshop participant).

69% of the expert workshop participants said that the lay perspectives are what they would have expected to see. The biggest surprise to the workshop participants was the degree to which all stakeholders felt they have little influence over making change happen and particularly the low degree of influence farmers perceive that they have with regards to food and farming (from the evidence gathered at the two focus groups for farmers and graziers). To many this signals the degree of disconnect that farmers feel with regard to affecting change and the extent to which this is of concern in terms of moving the ecosystems approach forward in the Cambrians: *“EGS will be about the future of farming and land management; this will become more apparent as markets develop”* (expert workshop participant).

Overall, the experts did see the value of understanding others’ perspectives. Where they expressed a small degree of caution was whether those perspectives are sufficiently sophisticated and robust to be informative. In the words of one workshop participant: *“while the perspective of the public should be listened to, this should be in the context that they are not experts and many are likely to have vested interests”* (expert workshop participant).

### Learning points

- Public dialogue processes can give **insights into a wide range of perspectives** and challenge people’s assumptions about how others feel about ecosystem services and their role within that.
- It is vital to **trust the public / lay stakeholders** to be able to have quality discussions with a high quality of deliberation on complex and technical issues.

- There is a need to consider how to **explore the best routes for exerting influence** and how to best **engage farmers**.

### 3. Impacts and outcomes

The evidence and learning set out below relates to the change that the dialogue process has achieved or has aspirations to achieve. The desired outcomes, drawn from the overall project objectives, look to see change and impact in the following areas:

- Greater understanding and buy in across stakeholder groups to EGS approach and proposals.
- To draw together stakeholder views, ideas and proposals, developed through the dialogue, to influence policy that can support an ecosystems approach.

*The commentary in this section about influencing policy and future action refers to the feedback from the expert stakeholders who attended the workshop since the focus group participants were not asked about influence during their sessions. A large part of the feedback from the expert stakeholders in relation to the difference and impact the process could make relates to **opportunities to influence policy** and the need for the findings to promote and support **practical ‘on the ground action’** that will translate theory and policy into practice.*

Findings are organised under the following themes:

- A meaningful and valid process.
- Policy influence.
- Supporting implementation.
- Thinking and acting differently.

#### 3.1 A meaningful and valid process

Overall, feedback strongly indicated that the process of dialogue was meaningful and useful with robust information being provided to support the discussions at the different stages. Although the discussions and related material was meaningful and participants appreciated the ‘time to think’ there was still some scepticism about how impactful their time and efforts would be in terms of policy influence and getting EGS projects on the ground. This was reinforced by the focus group findings presented to the experts’ session that showed that no single group felt that they had much influence.

Respondents felt that outputs from the sessions were good but still lacked a clear focus on practical next steps. Across all stakeholder sectors there was a clear message that now is the time to take the outputs from the process in terms of stakeholder motivation, data, ideas and proposals and quickly get pilot / demonstration EGS projects up and running. Without this shift into trials and implementation any further dialogue will be regarded as counter productive.



There is a sense among workshop participants that there is sufficient data and that the arguments have been sufficiently rehearsed to now move into a practical testing phase.

Some comments suggested that finding the right 'hooks' was difficult. Topics that 'experts' may feel are valid such as climate change mitigation may not resonate with the public who find areas such as flooding, water quality and energy more relevant to their day to day concerns. Indeed the Environment Agency pointed out that the public care about their water bill, insurance premium and the risk of flooding more than carbon capture or biodiversity. An ecosystems approach should provide a wide range of environmental benefits but an effective way forward is to make deliberations meaningful to the sector being engaged. The initiative was responsive to this in its focus on flooding in the work undertaken with the public in Shrewsbury and Monmouth. This proved a successful approach since it generated interesting feedback and made links with a cross section of people who agreed to attend the focus groups local to them (i.e. the downstream communities of Monmouth and Shrewsbury).

### Learning points

- Further multi stakeholder dialogue initiatives are likely to be counter productive if there is still very limited **implementation of pilot / demonstration EGS projects**, following directly on from this and the previous dialogue activities.
- Care needs to be taken to **make EGS dialogue meaningful and relevant** to the stakeholders involved.

### 3.2 Policy influence

There was strong feedback across the expert stakeholders that it is now an opportune time to influence policy in support of the ecosystems agenda. If influence is not brought to bear on policy development now then a major opportunity is likely to be missed. Key drivers mentioned include the following:

- The Rural Development Plan (RDP) consultation period is happening now and provides an excellent opportunity to influence the management of agriculture, land and natural resources over the period of the new RDP (2014-2020). The RDP will also support the delivery of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Habitats Directives that also have ecosystems thinking embedded within them.
- The establishment of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) could provide an opportunity to embed EGS in the thinking and practice of this new body as it develops its vision, plans and strategies.
- Devolved power is giving Wales more control over the management of natural resources and, given the small population and connectedness of many people to the

rural economy, it is important that the ecosystem services provided are sustainably managed.

- There is rising awareness among the public, land managers and farmers that good management of landscape and natural resources can be good for the environment as well as contributing substantially to the economy, individual incomes and well being. Farmers and land managers will be receptive if there are demonstrable economic outcomes from an EGS approach.
- A momentum and willingness for joint working and collective policy influence has been created by this project. This needs to be built upon otherwise the opportunity is likely to be lost.
- Alun Davies has recently been promoted to take ministerial responsibility in the Welsh Government for Natural Resources and Food. The bringing together of agriculture, fisheries and food with that of the environment portfolio under one Minister provides the opportunity to promote how ecosystems thinking can support the delivery of this department's new brief, combining food production and pro environmental outcomes.

There was consistent feedback from respondents that the RDP represents the best focus for policy influence and in turn EGS projects being implemented on the ground. CCW in particular identified itself as having the responsibility to use the findings from the process to frame a collective response and proposal as part of the RDP consultation process. The RDP team within Welsh Government are supportive and are working with CCW to ensure the response is appropriate and EGS are directed at the appropriate parts/regulations of the planning process.

Although the establishment of NRW may make for a busy and confusing period it also offers the opportunity to influence thinking and policy and the new organisation is brought together.

Staff working on EGS issues within CCW will have some influence but feedback suggests that they will be in a much more influential position if the momentum and connections from the dialogue process are used to frame cross sector proposals into government that also include farmers and land managers. There appears to be the appetite among process participants to support this and those interviewed, who are within the Welsh Government RDP and Land, Forestry, Fisheries departments, are open to dialogue and to discuss proposals. A number of respondents fed back that it will come down to bringing together a committed small group of individuals who can work together to take this policy agenda forward.

### Learning points

- There is a desire and urgency across sectors to use the findings of the dialogue process effectively **to influence policy**. There is a very good opportunity immediately through the RDP consultation process. Other drivers and

opportunities (as set out above) are also important.

- CCW will have more influence over policy if it **continues to work with stakeholders** who participated in the dialogue process as it develops policy-influencing proposals and plans. There is a willingness to participate. The continued inclusion of farmers and land managers will be important. Co-delivery and collaboration will be essential in taking the EGS agenda forward.
- The findings of the dialogue process need to be **clearly reported and disseminated** widely including to those shaping policy in related areas.

### 3.3 Supporting implementation

There was strong support across all expert stakeholders sectors that it is now vital to get working examples of EGS initiatives and processes up and running. There has been a long period of information gathering and dialogue (including the Sciencewise funded Ecosystems Services Dialogue pilot in 2011<sup>5</sup>) and now it is time to implement / try out some of these ideas.

A number of imperatives and drivers were mentioned:

- If there's no substantive scale implementation on the ground stakeholder enthusiasm and motivation to be involved in any further dialogue or research will be substantially diminished. It will take a long time to rebuild the momentum and support that exists now.
- There is an imperative to action given the stresses / impact of climate change and land management practices that are having a detrimental effect on ecosystems and the resilience of natural processes.
- If economic as well as environmental and social benefits of EGS provision can be demonstrated to farmers and landowners then support can be built for changes in behaviour and practice. This can't happen in a theoretical way; initiatives that can show the benefit need to be up and running. Upland farming is experiencing difficult economic times and so farmers and land managers are likely to be receptive to initiatives that support the resilience of their businesses in difficult times.
- It will be important to show that there are markets for EGS that can provide a return to those who provide produce them.
- An understanding of the motivation to change ways of working and the risk of doing so needs to be understood. Risk mitigation strategies need to be developed.

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<sup>5</sup> See project reports at [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/public-engagement-on-landscape-ecosystem-futures-in-england-scotland-and-wales/](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/public-engagement-on-landscape-ecosystem-futures-in-england-scotland-and-wales/)

There was a general view that the RDP may be the best vehicle to provide a policy driver and related funds to take on a substantial EGS pilot project. A catchment scale of 30-40 000ha was considered the ideal by CCW with a dedicated project team to work with stakeholders.

There was a willingness and desire across all sectors to put in place real projects that can be used for learning, demonstration, persuasion and production. These initiatives need to explore whether and how it is possible to work in a way that combines ecological benefits, the production of goods and services (such as energy, clean water, flood mitigation, tourism) and food production. Farmers and land managers need to have confidence in these 'new markets' and know where their income will come from if their products are clean water, energy, flood mitigation, sustainable tourism etc. A number of respondents fed back that some mechanism for risk mitigation would help drive behaviour change. Land managers and farmers are less likely to try out new products and services if they perceive there is a financial or regulatory risk. If guarantees through support, advice, grants, loans etc. could be put in place there is likely to be more willingness to try to work in a different way.

The Young Farmers Club representative in particular was positive about the new generation of farmers who are likely to be the next managers of a substantial amount of the land in the Cambrians. He felt that there are already a number of pioneering farmers out there who, with the appropriate support, would be willing to pilot EGS initiatives. He was committed to taking the agenda to his members (using the materials and findings from the dialogue process) to find out if this is an area of interest within the young farming community.

*“EGS will be about the future of farming and land management; this will become more apparent as markets develop and I can guarantee that farmers will be the first ones knocking on the door to say, I want a bit of that”. YFC representative.*

The National Trust too is willing to work with land managers and farmers who are sympathetic to the EGS agenda if initiatives can be put in place.

### Learning points

- There is **clear cross sector support**, from CCW, Welsh Government, environmental / conservation organisations and some farmers and land managers, to put EGS into practice at a substantial scale. There is a range of opportunities to explore how this can be done. As in the policy agenda above, it will need a collaborative approach across organisations and sectors to make it happen.
- There is a need for an **on-going dialogue with farmers and land managers** to demythologise EGS and find appropriate mechanisms and risk mitigation

strategies to encourage pilot initiatives. Any continuing dialogue needs to build explicitly on past dialogue so that there are clear links to what has already been discussed.

- More work needs to be done to establish and communicate to producers and providers the income generating potential of and 'new markets' for EGS.
- The RDP could be a crucial vehicle to create the policy environment and the focus of funds on EGS initiatives.

### **3.4 Thinking and acting differently**

It is the case that the majority (90%) of focus group participants do now understand more about the issues related to Wales' Natural Wealth as a result of taking part in the dialogue process. It is too early to say whether that will translate into behaviour change, although feedback suggests interest in peat issues, groups like 38 Degrees and farmers who said they would be willing to collaborate with organisations like CCW and the National Trust on EGS issues.

The issue of payment for EGS is complex. Some feedback suggested that EGS is a middle class issue or that the public are already paying for these services through taxes and utility bills.

55% of focus group respondents would however support a levy on utility and insurance bills to help pay for natural wealth improvements. 35% say that evidence of support for natural wealth projects would influence their choice of utility / insurance provider. 30% would be willing to see more tax revenue used to support natural wealth improvements although 17.5% would not be willing to support a levy because they think this should be covered by what we already pay through taxation.

Interestingly, feedback from the facilitator and other expert respondents suggested that a key barrier to supporting a contribution to EGS is that of governance and accountability. People know that flood management, clean water etc. costs money but want to know how their money is used by those who are making the decisions and spending it. Recent flooding events and scandals such as the horsemeat revelations are perhaps indicative of a lack of transparency about decision-making and use of funds. Greater transparency and accountability and demonstrable evidence of benefit may make people more supportive of paying directly for EGS.

As highlighted above, feedback suggested that farmers feel that they don't have much impact and influence over policy. This finding was surprising to a number of people in the Welsh Government and NGOs as the farming lobby is perceived as strong in Wales. It could be that EGS is perceived to be new and potentially a threat to traditional ways of managing land and farming practice. As well as ongoing dialogue with and

engagement of farmers, a number of participants also point out that other sectors and 'downstream' consumers also have a stake in contributing to policy and practice around land management.

### Learning points

- There is still need to **communicate well to all sectors** what EGS and an ecosystem approach may look like in practice. In particular the perception that EGS is just about the environment needs to be worked through.
- A potentially **powerful behaviour change driver** will be demonstration EGS projects on the ground.
- There is recognition that ecosystem goods and services need to be **resourced and paid for**. While there is support in principle for doing this, the mechanisms for doing so need to be explored further and it is important that there is a transparency and accountability that can demonstrate how resources are being used and to what end.
- **On-going information and communication** to all stakeholders in an appropriate way is important to continue the dialogue and build understanding.

## 4. Conclusion

The Cambrian Mountains Dialogue Project has, overall, been a well-received piece of work; professionally designed and facilitated with participants feeling it was a worthwhile use of their time and energy. People felt able to contribute, learning was good and non-expert / lay stakeholders were able to discuss complex issues and communicate their views to a forum of EGS policy specialists and technical experts. Certainly there is agreement that the way forward has to be collaborative with policy makers, technical experts, producers and consumers contributing to and realising a vision for how and why land in the Cambrian Mountains should be managed for the benefit of all. Feedback suggests that having built understanding, established some significant degree of common direction and created a momentum it will be particularly important to keep stakeholders informed and involved, particularly land managers and farmers.

Strong feedback across the different stakeholder groups does however suggest that participants now want to see the project move swiftly into an action phase where the findings of this process and the connections and relationships developed are used to inform the establishment of Ecosystem Goods and Services initiatives. At an organisational level there is willingness across public, private and voluntary sectors to support CCW in this transition from dialogue and research into projects on the ground. Many participants fed back that the next stage of EGS development had to be through pilot initiatives where challenges such as combining ecological, social and economic outputs are worked through, markets for EGS are explored and it is possible to achieve learning through doing.

There is also a clear policy dimension that needs to be put in place to provide both the regulatory and resourcing capacity for EGS initiatives to succeed. There was agreement that the development of the new Rural Development Plan for Wales (RDP) is a major opportunity for the realisation of EGS goals. It is currently in the consultation stage and both the Welsh Government team working on the RDP and stakeholders to the process agree that this opportunity must not be missed. CCW (and NRW beyond 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013) are charged with drawing on the momentum and findings of the dialogue process and to work with others to ensure that the new RDP is equipped to support EGS goals.