Ecosystem Services Public Dialogue

Project Evaluation

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June 2011

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Executive summary

Background

The report sets out key learning points and related evidence from the evaluation of the Ecosystem Services Public Dialogue project. Three small public dialogue pilot projects in England, Scotland and Wales were established and managed by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Government Office for the East of England (GO-East), and co-funded by Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (ERC)[1]. In each pilot area consultant teams designed and facilitated engagement processes to test out how well the public and stakeholders can enter into dialogue, using the science of ecosystem services and their own knowledge, to support more integrated and sustainable land use policy making and environmental planning decisions. In addition, The Natural Capital Initiative (NCI) has supported the project in drawing out lessons that will help the process of embedding policy and practice on participatory approaches to ecosystem valuations.

Evaluative approach

The learning and evidence set out in the report has been drawn from a collation and analysis of stakeholder and participant interviews from across the three pilots, a focus group with the Scottish projects' steering group, interviews with Sciencewise-ERC and NCI representatives, attendance at project workshops in Scotland and Wales and the appraisal of background documents and interim project reports. An evaluation framework developed and agreed with Sciencewise-ERC and NCI has provided the terms of reference and closely guided and structured the evaluative questioning through the stakeholder interviews and the observation of meetings.

Key findings

Given the timing of the evaluative process (i.e. running alongside the delivery of the pilots) the majority of the more robust learning is about the process of designing and delivering the initiatives. There is less clarity about policy influence and what may be productive next steps, although some influence is being brought to bear and there is learning about how the approaches could be further applied and developed.

Overall those engaged fed back that participating in the deliberative processes was positive and interesting, enabling meaningful conversations about issues that were important for local communities. For many this was the first opportunity to have these discussions with others and the eco system services approach provided a useful lens through which to view issues such as the impact of climate change and landscape / land use planning.

A fundamental process point however is that public dialogue projects must communicate the purpose of the exercise to those the initiatives seeks to engage. This was not done well across all projects, the process being clear but the intended outcomes not. Equally reporting must go back to participants to validate their participation and demonstrate the likely benefit of the dialogue process. Again this was variable.

[1] The Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (ERC) funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), helps policy makers to understand and use public dialogue to inspire, inform and improve policy decisions around science and technology. It consists of a comprehensive online resource of information, advice and guidance together with a wide range of support services aimed at policy makers and all the different stakeholders involved in science and technology policy making, including the public. The Sciencewise- ERC also provides co-funding to Government departments and agencies to develop and commission public dialogue activities. www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

Pressure of time worked against all of the pilots and restricted the establishment of meaningful linkages pre and post dialogue process with community structures and current policy development. The Welsh pilot was particularly strong in terms of working with ongoing community structures (the Menter groups) and achieved some initial but positive policy links through meetings with the Department for Rural Affairs in the Welsh Assembly Government. The Machars pilot in Scotland also benefitted from working with a pre existing community organisation (Machars Action) who may be able to perpetuate some of the work undertaken. A range of policy instruments were cited as having been influenced or likely to be influenced with particular potential emerging from the Welsh and Scottish pilots. This may reflect the better / easier links the commissioning and delivery teams had with the devolved administrations.

Although feedback was good about the running of the meetings, more clarity, in terms of framing discussion questions, was needed and discussion facilitators at tables would have enabled better focus and recording of key points. Methods that enabled a visualisation of planning options, ecosystem types and related goods and services were particularly useful.

The understanding of ecosystem services as a concept was good and helped those engaged to move quickly into meaningful conversations about landscape and land use planning. Indeed, the entry point of ecosystem services enabled groups to discuss what could potentially be contentious subjects such as wind energy projects and coastline management more openly and with less immediate polarisation of views.

The input of science was cautious across all pilots with the majority feedback from participants indicating that more detailed, in depth but well explained science would have assisted the depth and breadth of deliberations. Timescales again worked against this, however drawing more on, and interpreting clearly, existing regional and national research would help. Other structures and methods that allow a more in depth deliberation may also need to be considered.

The pilots were considered good value for money and time was well used however Sciencewise-ERC could have considered teaming up with organisations such as Living With Environmental Change and the National Ecosystem Assessment to enable more resources to be deployed, a broader data source established and additional routes into policy. This may be an arrangement that could be developed as the learning from the pilots moves the debate and methodologies forward.

Next steps could include a scaling up and replication of the approach. There is already another similar piece of work being delivered in Scotland and the Cambrian Mountain Initiative in Wales will use the learning as it further develops its Polyscape modelling. Caution needs to be exercised in streamlining and simplifying the methodologies as suggested by some respondents, as given the need for an understanding of both complex and uncertain futures a simplified version may struggle to achieve the required insight, quality of debate and longer term links to community structures and policy.

1. Overview of the project and the approach to evaluation

The report sets out key learning points and related evidence from the evaluation of the Ecosystem Services Public Dialogue project.

Background to the initiative
Three small public dialogue pilot projects in England, Scotland and Wales have been established and managed by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Government Office for the East of England (GO-East). The projects were co-funded and supported by Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (ERC), and delivered by specialist consultants during the period October 2010 – March 2011. In each pilot area the consultant teams have designed and facilitated engagement processes to test out how well the public and stakeholders can enter into dialogue, using the science of ecosystem services and their own knowledge, to support more integrated and sustainable land use and environmental planning decisions.

In addition, the Natural Capital Initiative (NCI) has been supporting the project in drawing out lessons that will help the process of embedding policy and practice on participatory approaches to ecosystem valuations. Icarus Collective's role has been as the independent evaluator of the programme. This work was sponsored through the Sciencewise-ERC, as part of a work package led by the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, a partner in the Natural Capital Initiative.

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. Here it has a particular focus, ensuring that the value of ecosystem services is fully reflected in policy and decision making in Defra and across Government. Scottish Natural Heritage also promotes the ecosystem approach as a framework.

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

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

The term an **ecosystem services approach** is often used as a way of identifying the benefits people receive from the environment, and valuing them in one way or another.

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.

This project created three initiatives that aimed to pilot a **participatory ecosystem services approach** bringing together scientists and lay people to assess the practical methodologies and potential policy value of ecosystem services led integrated thinking.

Project overviews

Scotland - SNH have developed and piloted a deliberative methodology in two areas of Scotland that uses an Ecosystems Services Approach to engage community members and key local stakeholders in exploring the effects of climate change on their local landscapes and quality of life. It is hoped that a better understanding of the value of landscape and the services it provides will help in framing policy and decision making in relation to mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The pilots focussed on the settlements of Nairn in Highland and the Machars in Dumfries and Galloway. Each took place over three consecutive evenings, a week apart, running from 6.30 to 9pm. About 20 people were recruited to attend each series of events and these formed a 'community panel' made up of local leaders, community representatives, local NGOs, local business owners, students etc. This panel was recruited by the local community development organisation and the project provided incentives in the way of soup and sandwiches each evening, travel expenses (~ £25 per session) and a raffle each night.

The three stage workshop process was broadly as follows

1. Identify distinctive elements of the landscape, and the ecosystem goods and service provided by them
2. Review climate change impacts, and how this would change the features, and the goods and services resulting from them. This was scored as no change or - / -- / 0 / + / ++
3. Discuss choices and trade-offs for local and policy action, to manage the climate change effects

Participants were provided with a range of large scale wall maps and data so they could base their analysis on sound evidence.

SNH provided the main policy home for the dialogue, and they were joined on the steering group by the Forestry Commission, the National Parks, the local authorities for the area and the Scottish Government.

The consultant team was led by Land Use Consultants and the Small Town and Rural Development Group (STAR).

Wales - As part of their work in support of the Cambrian Mountains Initiative, CCW, in conjunction with Land Use Consultants and Bangor University, have recently undertaken a DEFRA funded Adaptive Landscapes project that looked at how the best areas for mitigation measures against the impacts of climate change could be mapped across a number of river catchments in the north-west of the Cambrian Mountains region using a computerised poly-mapping tool.

To complement this project Sciencewise-ERC funded and supported a pilot public / stakeholder engagement process in the Cambrian Mountains area to consider the perception and value of Ecosystems Goods and Services (EGS) in the study area and make recommendations for policy and practice.

The purpose of the Cambrian Mountains dialogue has been to establish a base-line with regard to public perception of EGS; and to see if that perception changed following the provision of science based information about EGS and the likely landscape change as climate change mitigation and adaptation is sought. The public / stakeholders then assessed the value, or level of concern, they attached to any mitigation measures and made recommendation for the ways forward.

The process focused on the north west corner of the Cambrian Mountains area. Two broad areas were chosen: Machynlleth and the north, and Talybont and the south, and community workshops were held in each. In addition a business workshop was convened for both areas, and three 'street stalls' were set up in the main town shopping areas (Machynlleth). The workshops were organised by the local community groups 'Menter' groups. 15-20 people attended each.

The one stage workshop process was broadly as follows:

1. Identify benefits received from the environment currently
2. Score these benefits, using a pie wheel and 1 - 3 point scale
3. Identify where changes were occurring in the landscape uses and benefits (in context of climate, CAP reform, economic etc)
4. Re-score landscape benefits, post change

5. Allocate £2000 Monopology money where they felt their taxes should be spent to preserve landscape benefits
6. Identify key land management issues requiring change

The participants had access to various reports about land use in the area and possible climate change futures.

The street stalls offered an opportunity to gather wider public feedback on what landscape benefits were changing, which changes were concerns and how those taking part would allocate their taxes. 25 dropped in on the the street stalls.

Finally a one day policy workshop reconvened some of the workshop participants (~10), and additional stakeholders and policy makers (~20), to ask:

- What needs to change in land use planning
- Assess three specific agricultural policy scenarios
- What role could a polyscape mapping play in public dialogue

The consultant team was led by Resources for Change.

England - In phase one of the Valuing Ecosystems Services in the East of England (VESiEE) a study was undertaken to assess and evaluate the ecosystem services in the East of England. A methodology was developed based on the framework of the UN Millennium Assessment. Five case study areas, with a range of ecosystems and characteristics were chosen to test the methodology. The case studies demonstrated the value of some of the most important ecosystems services in the East of England and provided robust evidence. They focus on different issues in different case study areas - to demonstrate how the ecosystems services approach can be applied in a range of situations. The first phase was based on theoretical scenarios; the second phase has taken the methodology from phase one, adapted it for public and stakeholder use and tested it through a range of real life regional and local pilots.

In the East of England two pilots were commissioned to deliver this 2nd phase.

1. The Arable Agriculture Local Pilot which has considered practical applications of the VESiEE approach to case study arable farms.
2. Applying an ecosystem services approach to consider options for the future of two sites in the Lee Valley Regional Park. The Park stretches 26 miles along the banks of the River Lee, from Ware in Hertfordshire, through Essex, to the Thames at East India Dock Basin.

The **agricultural project** identified four distinct ecosystem areas in the area (Herts, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk) and worked in a two stage process.

First they worked with farmers to identify the main ecosystem services offered by their farms, and the possibilities for the future, in the context of CAP reform and climate change. These were then shared in evening workshops to:

- Score ecosystem services as they currently stand (score 1-10)
- Discuss the desired future balance of ecosystems services (score 1-10)

Incentives were offered in the way of soup and sandwiches and travel expenses. Recruitment was via local networking conducted by the contractor and Sustainability East, with quotas for different types of participant. About 15 people came to each.

The workshops were followed by a larger stakeholder workshop which also asked participants to create and score a future vision of ecosystem services.

The **Lea Valley Regional Park** project aimed to explore local opinion through an ecosystem service lens in relation to two possible development projects.
First a planning workshop was held with key stakeholders. This was followed by a one hour focus group in each of the two sites. 27 local residents and interest group members attended in total. The groups:

- Identified important elements and benefits of the site
- Used flashcards to identify current services provided or not provided
- Used proformas to identify high and low value services that are / are not provided by the site
- Identified effects on services from the proposed development

A half day workshop with a mix of professional and community participants followed to:

- consider the different options
- present case study findings to the LVRPA and Steering Group
- input the preferences of the focus group sessions
- reach a preferred option
- critically discuss utility of ESA

The Agricultural Policy initiative was led by URSUS Consulting Ltd. and Dialogue by Design. The Lee Valley Regional Park pilot was led by Scott Wilson.

Comparison of project designs

The table below summarises the basic of each event series design. Projects all attempted to develop 'lower cost' models of public dialogue and the approximate costs and designs are shown below. A very rough estimate of 'contact hours' has also been calculated.

Project	Sites	Events in each location	Total number community engaged in workshops	Total person hours of engagement	Cost	Additional stakeholder workshop
Scotland	2	3	20 + 20 = 40	360	~ £40k	Steering group meetings
Wales	2	1 event + street stall + workshop	15 + 20 =35	105 + 10 + 60 = 175	~ £40k	Final one day
East – Agri	4	1 + farmer	15 + 15 + 15 + 15 = 60	180 + 5 = 185	~ £20	Half day
East – LVRP	2	1 + workshop	15 + 10 = 25	25 + 15 = 40	~ £20k	Half day

The approach to evaluation

The evaluation aims to provide a independent assessment of the Dialogue's credibility, effectiveness and success against its deliverables and objectives throughout the programme and at its conclusion. It was possible to provide interim learning to the Scottish pilots however the East of England and Welsh pilots only concluded their own work shortly before the evaluation deadline and so no project specific interim reporting was possible for these two initiatives. Headline evaluation findings were provided however for the seminar on 17th March for Whitehall environment policy leads, analysts and Defra delivery network representatives.

The learning and evidence set out in the report has been drawn from a collation and analysis of stakeholder and participant interviews from across the three pilots, a focus group with the Scottish projects' steering group, interviews with Sciencewise-ERC and NCI representatives, attendance at project workshops in Scotland and Wales and the appraisal of background documents and interim project reports. Specifically in depth interviews have been undertaken with relevant people from the Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage and Go East (5 interviews), individual project contractors including facilitation teams (9 interviews), Sciencewise-ERC (2 interviews), NCI (1 interview), participating local authorities, voluntary sector and other agencies (5 interviews) and community participants (7 interviews).

An evaluation framework developed and agreed with Sciencewise-ERC and NCI reflected the questions that Sciencewise-ERC wanted to consider and has provided the terms of reference and closely guided and structured the evaluative questioning through the stakeholder interviews and the observation of meetings (see appendix 1).

The principle intention of the evaluation is to distil the overall learning from the whole programme through the analysis of structured feedback from a range of different perspectives on the initiative – participants (community and agency), commissioners, management teams and the consultants who designed and delivered the programme.

Within the evaluation themes comparisons are made between the different approaches to draw out learning. The evaluation is not structured however to compare each aspect of the evaluation framework's areas of investigation across the initiatives. Although they adopted broadly similar approaches they do not represent distinct models and there is a wide range of variables in terms of geography, starting point, local context and the stakeholders involved.

How this report is structured

The report is structured by theme. The five broad areas evaluated are as follows.

- The design and delivery of the pilot processes
- Developing integrated thinking
- Policy influence
- Additional outcomes / added value
- Next steps

Each of the themes is broken down into individual topic areas. Within each of the topic areas key learning points are set out in the shaded boxes to provide an overview of the findings followed by the supporting evidence, illustrative quotations from respondents and more general commentary drawn principally from the interviews and workshop observations.

2. The design and delivery of the pilot processes

The learning set out below reviews the effectiveness of the process design and delivery in effectively engaging the public and stakeholders in productive dialogue related to the aims and desired outcomes of each of the pilot projects. It covers the elements that need to be in place to effectively design, convene and facilitate the meetings and workshops that took place.

The overall design of the processes

Consistent feedback from across all the pilots suggested that community participants and others were not clear from the outset what they were being invited to participate in and why. They only found out through participating and many took at least one meeting to understand the focus of the project. Although people found the topics interesting there was no real clarity among participants interviewed about exactly what the sessions were meant to achieve, how change could be influenced or how they might continue to be involved.

"At the beginning of the process it was never really established what the process was for. It was suggested that something would happen as a result of the process but that something would be dictated by the process. Seemed woolly then and seems a bit woolly now. Seems contradictory as you're told the process is about having informed and intelligent discussion but you're not actually informed about what the informed and intelligent discussion is for". (participant, Cambrian mountains process).

*"What we were doing was clear, why was not" (*participant, Scottish pilot).

"In the first workshop there was a feeling of not really knowing what the point was. Discussing similar stuff to what we talk about in the pub" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

"It was a good example of deliberative methodology but if the findings go nowhere then it's not been worth it. It just enables the practitioners in the middle to feel they have done something". (participant, Cambrian Mountains process)

Even if the facilitation team /commissioning body intended to report back, community participants did not know whether a feedback meeting was being planned, or if they would get any feedback from the process or an opportunity to discuss next steps.

"Not enough time for the conclusions, bringing things together. What is needed for a resilient eco-system locally was rushed. It was a very tight agenda. We discussed a lot on land use planning options but less time for drawing things together". (participant, Cambrian Mountains process)

It was pointed out that the broad cross section of stakeholders needs to be kept in touch with deliberations as this is where the knowledge base lies. If contact is lost with stakeholders after the initiative, considerable time and effort will be needed to re-establish that connection and relationship.

It was noted by a participant in one process and reflected in comments from other participants across the pilots that the impetus for the commissioning, convening, design and facilitation of the processes largely came from middle ranking agency staff. This meant that the initiatives were neither 'bottom up' nor 'top down'. There is a danger that this starting point may fail to take the grass roots with it or engage the attention of senior policy makers.

"The impetus for the sessions seems to have come from somewhere in the middle – it's not a bottom up process or top down. There's work to be done to engage both up and down. Need to consider whether starting from the middle is wanted or desired by either of the other two ends".
(participant, Cambrian Mountains process)

Learning points

a. There is a need to be **clear about the purpose** of the exercise from the start of the engagement process: why the engagement is being convened, what it hopes to achieve / change and the ongoing role of the participants in it. This needs to be communicated very clearly to potential participants to enable them to decide the worth of taking part or not.

b. **Sufficient time** is required within the sessions delivered to draw out substantive conclusions, agreed actions or next steps. Time was tight during the pilots and this stage had not been adequately programmed into the processes.

c. Participants need to know what **impact** the process has had. There is a need in all the pilots to report back. Ideally a feedback / future planning meeting or failing that clear and prompt written reporting so that participants can have an overview of the findings and proposed actions from their deliberations and plan any next steps. If this does not take place any buy in and motivation to participate generated by the process is likely to be lost.

d. Care needs to be taken in establishing the processes to engage with and seek buy in from **community stakeholders** as well as **senior policy makers and politicians** at the outset.

Engaging the right people
Feedback suggests that the individuals who participated were generally perceived as going 'beyond the usual suspects' and provided a good mix of backgrounds, interests and split between agency and community. It was important to make sure that there is sufficient knowledge and experience of the issues being discussed in the group. A good mix and balance between scientists, practitioners and interested lay people (e.g. farmers, land owners), and community organisation representatives was achieved. Participation at a local level also included urban residents, business representatives and local authority members. It was pointed out that these groups also have opinions about land use planning but are not often consulted.

"Not the usual suspects, real people from a varied backgrounds. Not just the agricultural community but residents, members, business people – a good cross section".
(participant, Cambrian mountains process).

In most cases participants were invited to take part as they had an informed interest in the issues from a particular perspective rather than a purely random sample. However in the Lee Valley pilot the people were selected purely randomly, for the community based focus groups; they did not have a relationship to the issues or the site, and were perceived by the facilitation team to not be able to participate as effectively.

The length of lead in time was short in some pilots and this did cause some difficulties in recruitment and in creating linkages to local community structures. This in turn impacted on sustainability as there were no clear community led bodies to take forward the initiative. The Cambrian Mountain Initiative worked well in this respect as it had ongoing community linkages through the Menter groups (standing community development panels); the Machars pilot also linked into existing community structures.

Incentives for attending were contentious. Feedback from the Scottish pilot was positive about attendance payments and the raffle of a hamper each session. A different approach in the Cambrian Mountains process paid the Menter groups to undertake recruitment and support the process design which was perceived as a successful way to encourage 'buy in' without the perceived weaknesses of individual payments. The facilitation team in Wales fed back that that personal incentives and payments often attracts people who have little or no knowledge of or interest in the site / issue under discussion and can potentially weaken the constituency available for ongoing engagement in the issues.

There was particular criticism from a number of respondents that senior policy people from the Welsh government did not attend the Cambrian Mountain pilot second workshop.

"The Assembly needed to experience the discussions that were had not just hear about the conclusions reached……. It's all very well talking to ourselves and the CCW but it needed to be heard at a more senior level in government" (participant, Cambrian mountains process).

Learning points

e. Given the small scale and tight timetables of the pilot projects, the **selection of participants** who had an interest in the site / area in question and /or an area of expertise related to the issues under discussion worked well. Having 'informed / interested stakeholders' enabled a more productive and focussed use of time than open meetings or random samples.

f. It is important to have a sufficient **cross section of people** attending to ensure that there is sufficient knowledge and experience of the issues being discussed in the group. A good mix and balance between scientists, practitioners and interested lay people (e.g. farmers, land owners, business people), and community organisation representatives was achieved in most cases. There was a need (especially in the final meetings) to have more senior policy focussed representation from local authorities and government to experience the deliberative process and hear policy recommendations.

g. There is a need for **senior policy people** in local and national government and the voluntary sector not just to receive the report from these processes but to participate in and experience the deliberative process.

h. Pre and post process linkages with, and **buy in from, existing community structures** helps appropriate recruitment, an informed focus on the issues and the ongoing sustainability of the initiative.

i. There are difficulties in engaging and retaining **young people**. More lead in time and pre process work. and a process design that encouraged and enabled their participation, would have enabled more effective engagement with this constituency.

j. **Incentives** (such as payment) can help attract local knowledge experts to attend, although there is a risk that the reward attracts people who have little or no knowledge of or interest in the site / issue under discussion and can potentially weaken the constituency available for ongoing engagement in the issues.

k. It is important to ensure that local citizen representation is not confined to farmers and landowners / managers (as is often the case in land management based dialogue processes) but draws on a much **broader cross section** of the community in the study areas.

l. Complex processes such as these need to explore how to incorporate **national stakeholder** perspectives and input into deliberations at a local level. Ecosystem services science works at a broad scale and has a national perspective. For example, issues such as renewable energy generation will need to relate to a national debate and national stakeholders as well as local and regional stakeholders who are considering specifics such as wind farm location.

Facilitation and running of the engagement processes

There were many comments from all who participated that the facilitation was professional and that this helped ensure that there was good listening to different views and it was possible to have your voice heard. There was no evidence that experts dominated unduly in group discussions, indeed many were complemented for their ability to explain complex science to a lay audience.

"We could all discuss without feeling utter Charlies anything we wanted to – it was a very comfortable environment. A transparent and friendly day. My view altered slightly through the discussions. People listened to each other properly and nothing was too silly to discuss". (participant, Cambrian Mountains process)

Across each of the pilots there were comments about the clarity of the tasks that groups were being asked to undertake and discuss. Sometimes these were poorly explained, not focussed enough or just confusing. Poor task definition led to group time being spent deciphering what was required of them or groups working to slightly different briefs and producing results that were too generalised and lacking in content to be useful.

"It happens so often that you don't get asked the right question in the first place" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

Feedback suggested that more use of table facilitators would have helped groups focus more quickly on the task, use the time available better and help with more complete and accurate recording.

In the agricultural policy pilot in the East of England two observers were concerned that the note taking methods did not allow for all the valuable contributions to the debate to be recorded in the detail required. This was also an issue mentioned in the other pilots.

Learning points

m. Facilitated mixed group work and **interactive discussion** methods are regarded as a good way of working and ensuring good levels of participation.

n. The **questions** posed to initiate discussion need to be clear and well framed; it was often the case that the framing of questions lacked clarity or were ambiguous, resulting in conversations being poorly focussed, the group being confused or different groups having a different understanding of the task.

o. More use of **table facilitators** to clarify tasks, keep groups focussed, explain terminology, make best use of time, enable everyone to contribute and ensure quality recording is beneficial.

p. Robust mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that the nuances of debates have been captured and the conclusions have been **recorded** properly.

Methods used

In the Cambrian Mountains process participants received the Polyscape tool enthusiastically but all recognised, both from agency and community perspectives, that there needs to be caution exercised when using it as part of a deliberative methodology. They agreed that the Polyscape tool must not be used to arrive at decisions, but needs to be used the point at which discussions start; its function is to make these discussions better informed, more focussed and meaningful.

"Poly map is very useful but we need to recognise that's it's only as good as the information put into it so there needs to be a discussion before it is used as to what you want to get out of it. It needs to be decided what layers are needed and if the data is missing how to get it. There's an economic layer missing but also the hardest to collate" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

The Lee Valley participants fed back that they found it helpful to have this kind of dedicated 'head space' for detailed debate. This sentiment was reflected across the pilots with a number of respondents citing the time and space to have proper in-depth conversations that went beyond the 'yes': 'no' type decisions.

Learning points

q. Methods that enable participants to **visualise** land use planning options, ecosystem types and related goods and services are particularly useful. Particular mention was made of the Polyscape GIS modelling software and the 'real' money budgeting exercise used in the Cambrian Mountains Process, the large scale maps used in the Scottish pilots and the spider diagram method used in the agricultural policy process in the East of England.

r. The sessions provided participants with quality 'time out' to discuss issues in depth, have broad based **conversations** in a safe environment and to properly focus on specific areas and topics.

Time, space and resources

Overall feedback recognised that this pilot phase was challenging in terms of time and resource and this did result in some reduction in the quality of the processes. However, it was fed back by all pilots that the resource available to test out new approaches was very welcome indeed. Each pilot area has been able to constructively use the resource available to bridge from previous ecosystem services focussed work to ongoing initiatives.

Learning points

s. The **time** allocated for dialogue and deliberation across all projects was limited but the meeting time was used reasonably effectively.

t. Limited time and resources made it challenging for contractors to pull together the **scientific data** and put this into an accessible and meaningful format.

u. **Recruiting** participants is very time consuming and would benefit from more lead in time.

v. Facilitators / organisers need to **know the site** / location well; this was variable across the pilots.

w. Overall the processes were considered **good value** for the money and resources invested. These were micro dialogue processes compared to the usual Sciencewise-ERC approach and much was achieved from a relatively small investment across three regions.

x. **Collaboration** could have been explored as ecosystems services has a dispersed knowledge base and a partnership between Sciencewise-ERC and organisations such as Living With Environmental Change (LWEC) and the National Ecosystems Assessment could have provided a conduit to a broader knowledge / evidence base, additional resources and more routes into policy. This should be explored for any future initiative.

3. Developing integrated thinking

A key aim of the three pilots was to facilitate and test out the benefits of a process for the development of policy and practice whereby scientific knowledge and the knowledge and experience of local people and stakeholders could be brought productively together to achieve an integrated deliberation. Although there were variations in specific methods used, each pilot drew on scientific data and knowledge about how ecosystems work and the services they can offer. This data was presented and discussed in group sessions with local residents, businesses, community representatives and relevant agencies and some initial recommendations made that relate to policy or more specific actions and tasks to take forward. The learning about how well the integration of science and local knowledge worked is considered below through looking at the ecosystem services approach itself and whether the science was adequate and pitched at the right level.

The ecosystem services approach

The pilots each adopted a slightly different approach but each used the valuation of natural world 'services' or the 'services' of valued landscapes as a starting point in considering change and how to respond to change.

"We asked what does the natural world do for you? It worked as we were asking them what's changing – putting it into their world. You start to focus on things that have a local relevance if you ask what is changing. We didn't want to ask what was valued in landscape as that can get into quite esoteric stuff and can miss how the landscape earns money, it can miss the food production

side. By focussing on change and land use rather than landscape we felt we would hit both buttons both economic and esoteric". (facilitator)

In the Cambrian Mountains pilot a GIS based land use mapping model was introduced (Polyscape) and was well received as a useful tool to inform multi stakeholder deliberations. Although the tool was perceived as useful there are necessary prerequisites that need to be in place to enable it to be functional in stakeholder processes.

- Scale needs to be correct to balance data appropriateness against stakeholder meaningfulness
- Local stakeholders need to be able to input local socio/economic data as well as local level ecological and land use information

"There are positive signs that the spatial scale of the Cambrians was about right as the data was meaningful, it is a functioning community who knew each other, had a close connection to the land and could work together to effectively deliver. The spatial scale is key for these things to balance data appropriateness against stakeholder meaningfulness and the ability to take planning and action forwards". (CCW participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

A number of respondents across the pilots highlighted the value of a more neutral / less contentious entry point to landscape and land use planning issues that the ecosystem services lens provided. Rather than presenting stark options and alternatives, as is often the case in 'community consultation' on environment and land use issues (e.g. wind turbines or not, managed realignment or not), the ecosystem services approach provided a more structured and holistic approach. Group consensus is developed around what is valued in a landscape / the natural world; next there is a consideration of the 'services' the features provide. Only then does the group discuss what is changing and why, and what policy, practice and actions need to be put in place to mitigate or support change in a particular way. There was feedback across the pilots that this enabled the group to better embrace and discuss complex issues and work towards more considered and consensual ways forward. The only frustration was not having the time necessary for the discussions and the group to mature.

The valuation process proved contentious in one project where there were long debates about whether something should be scored a 7 or 8 (on a 1-10 scale). Feedback suggests that a broader assessment of red, amber, green, would have been adequate and enabled the group to move into more substantive dialogue more quickly.

There was a tendency in the Lee Valley and Scottish pilots for community and local representatives to put forward more cultural and social valuations of ecosystems such as the aesthetic, recreational or historical features. Scientists, practitioners and policy participants identified more ecological and economic services such as food production, flood mitigation, soil formation, fresh water provision etc. Provided the groups contained a good mix of positions and interests this was seen as a strength. Feedback from the Scottish process suggested that environmental professionals very much valued the identification of cultural and aesthetic features by local residents. Residents also identified some additional socio/economic features such as settlements vulnerable to sea level rise and key installations at risk that had been missed in 'official' appraisals.

In the Welsh pilot the facilitators deliberately modified the language used to ensure economic services were included.

"We didn't want to ask what was valued in a landscape as you get into quite esoteric stuff and can miss how the landscape earns money; can miss the food production side. By focussing on change and land use rather than landscape we felt we would hit both buttons, economic and esoteric. The opening question sequence was – what do you get from the natural world, how do you value them, what's changing, does that change how you value?" (facilitator)

Learning points

a. The ecosystems services approach is easily understood and a good entry point in discussing issues of land use planning. It was generally well received, although it was not described using this **terminology** in all the pilots.

b. Focussing on the correct **spatial scale** when considering how ecosystem services deliberation can translate into policy and action is key. A balance and alignment needs to be achieved between viable and meaningful data sets and what is meaningful for local stakeholders.

c. Attention and refinement is needed in the valuation process to take into account the different valuation a person may give if asked to consider a service from a personal, community, regional or national **perspective**.

d. Local stakeholders need to be able to contribute their **local and personal knowledge**, experience and data to any analytical tools that are being used to map or present land use data and science.

e. Using ecosystems services as a starting point in discussion about landscape and land use planning can facilitate effective **consensus building** around issues, options and proposals and a more in-depth and considered evaluation of evidence and options.

f. It is important that individual sessions do not become an education session to inform participants about the ecosystem services approach. It should form the **background** and reference point for debate but should not in itself dominate.

g. In a time restricted process it is counterproductive to spend a disproportionate amount of time on the detailed 'valuation' of ecosystem services. The valuation provides the **springboard to quality discussion** and is not an end in itself.

h. A good **cross section of stakeholder** representatives from all relevant sectors and interests ensured a balanced valuation of ecosystem services.

Getting the science right – language, level and quantity

Most feedback from community stakeholders and participants with a non science background suggested that they would have welcomed more rather than less formal input of science to better inform their discussions. It must be presented clearly however with time and space made available to ask questions and clarify meaning. Those with a scientific background often underestimated the ability of lay people to understand and use the science effectively. Interestingly, across all the projects feedback from most stakeholders with a science background considered the level presented about right whereas many of those without a science background considered the level was too basic.

Overall there was variable input of science from the convenors of the sessions, which ranged from too complex to extremely simplistic. Where scientists and lay people were brought together to discuss issues more informally round a table however a number of people reported that collaboration, clear explanation, good listening and mutual learning was of a high quality. What often limited this exchange was the time available.

"We needed more scientific information, there was too little, there were people there who knew a lot about the science…….there were a lot of very, very clever people in that room and they were wasted" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

"If the scientists had been given the time and space to talk then it would have been possible for others to ask questions, contribute their own ideas and understand better" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

"The non scientific people there were perfectly capable of asking questions and scientists could explain clearly" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

"Experts and science people very helpful. Someone on our table from CCW who was very helpful, if we were struggling he would rephrase it in a way we could understand. It really made me think and go quite excited by it" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

"the process was ridiculously short and that worked against getting science into the process as much as we wanted" (facilitator).

"Lay people can cope with a high level of sophisticated ideas whereas agency people can be a bit siloed" (facilitator).

One idea submitted was a Citizen's Jury type approach that could provide the time, space and rigour to engage meaningfully with the complexity of the issues.

"In an ideal world we would engage people in these big policy issues in a way that is akin to jury service. Fully funded, taken out of every day work for a day or two, can call experts, cross examine and make decisions based on that analysis" (CCW participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

"What came out of this process again and again is people saying we want more of this type of discussion; it is often put forward that people won't have the ability to deal with the complexity and that you'll just get simplistic responses but I feel that if you remove the economic constraints you get the value of people bringing their perspectives. And they will deliberate based on good quality information" (CCW participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

The workshop groups largely missed the opportunity to compare their own valuation of ecosystem services with that of scientists' valuations that were available in each region through independent research.

"Missing the scientists valuation and then getting local people and policy makers to comment on this (or vice versa). Some sort of comparison would have been useful and could have then sparked a conversation about why certain stakeholder groups put particular valuations on different elements for example, access to different data, experience, assumptions, scientific theory, preferences, priorities" (Sciencewise-ERC representative).

Pre existing scientific research and valuations of landscape was available at national and regional levels but little use was made of this resource by the pilots. For example Land Use Consultants had recently produced a document considering land use scenarios in Wales; there was also the work on the National Ecosystems Assessment. These could have been summarised and incorporated into the pilot processes. Feedback nationally suggested that

the deliberation had been good and that understanding was developed of the issues but it was perceived that participants and projects didn't manage to really engage with national expertise that is at the cutting edge of current debate on eco system services.

"If we can't communicate the evidence base we can't really have the integrated conversations that we are after" (Sciencewise-ERC).

"Projects have not drawn on the expertise available and put that overarching viewpoint into the debate. These national experts are not really interacting with citizens and haven't been tapped into given this project was about bringing different knowledge together" (NCI).

Learning points

i. There needs to be adequate input of **relevant science and data** provided that it is presented clearly and structured coherently to inform multi disciplinary and multi stakeholder discussions. To some extent the scientific input was too cautious in the pilots. Overall there was a too little input of science / data compared to the level that participants needed in order to be able to engage in well informed and meaningful discussions. This was partly due to the time constraints in preparation and during meetings (the pilots were small scale) but also reflected a failure to source and package all the relevant science available in meaningful summaries for use in the meetings.

j. A deficit of scientific input, compared to what was required, means that the valuations of eco system services are generated by the group, relating to features they value in the study area. Although this has merit the potential was missed of inputting existing scientific valuations of eco system services that could have enriched and deepened the deliberations.

k. Use should be made of existing **regional and national scientific expertise** and research within the field of eco system services. Pilots tended to rely on local expertise and data inputs with little use of existing studies or relevant national data sets.

l. A **joint planning meeting** of the project leads from each regional pilot before the detailed planning work began would have been productive. This could have highlighted and disseminated current leading edge thinking on ecosystems services science and signposted key national and regional level research and data to the projects. It would also have been beneficial in linking the pilots to leading experts through the National Ecosystem Assessment.

m. There is an **appetite** among participants for engaging in **meaningful, science informed deliberations** about complex issues. To enable the time and space needed the economic constraints of unpaid participants (e.g. having to give up a day's work to participate) need to be addressed.

n. A **Citizen's Jury** type methodology may be appropriate in enabling a more rigorous evaluation of the many data strands, expert scientific input needed and the time that is required from lay people and community representatives to have meaningful deliberation on the issues.

o. Valuation is a **difficult term** for some participants to engage with. The term benefits is more descriptive of what information is required.

p. It requires thoughtful preparation to find a consistent language that makes sense to all and is not too **jargon** rich. The use of technical terms and concepts (when clearly explained) is acceptable and useful. There is a balance to be established between too many technical terms and 'dumbing down' too much to the point of being patronising and meaningless.

4. Policy influence

An important test and aspiration of the pilot processes was that the integrated thinking would produce tangible and innovative policy recommendations and influence. This was addressed by all pilots at different levels and scales; the Cambrian Mountains Initiative for example, took a very proactive approach in convening a meeting with the Welsh Minister for Rural Affairs immediately after the final workshop, while the Scottish process established good policy and practice related links with local authorities during the process which then helped shape other dialogue initiatives and regional strategies.

Challenges and opportunities

Most respondents were positive about the potential of the processes to influence policy but considered it too early to quantify the influence from such small scale pilots.

Feedback across all the pilots suggested that a key message to policy makers is that the public can meaningfully engage with complex land use planning issues. Given a good process and access to meaningful science and data the informed and interested public can effectively contribute their own knowledge and experience to productive effect.

A number of individual respondents representing local authorities or large voluntary sector organisations cited examples of future work and practice that the learning from the processes could influence.

Learning points

a. Evaluation of policy influence needs to happen some time after the process has taken place; it is very early in the process to properly assess the impact of the pilots in this regard and it needs to be viewed in the context of the relatively small scale of the pilot processes. There will be merit in **revisiting** these initiatives later when a better assessment can be made of their impact and influence on policy. There is certainly learning however in terms of where policy influence could be most effective and what needs to be influenced both in terms of process and content.

b. There is a desire to have policy influence nationally and within the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. However the most **immediate policy and practice impact** is likely to be within the commissioning organisations of CCW, SNH and GO East and some of the local authority and third sector organisations who participated.

c. Policy influence at a local authority level may be limited as the green infrastructure agenda is currently dominating policy debate on ecological land use planning. An ecosystem services approach is likely, due to its focus on landscape at a broad level, to have more resonance with regional and national planning processes. There is evidence however that the process of stakeholder engagement and deliberation on land use issues will **influence practice** at a local level through individual local authority officers and voluntary sector staff who participated in the processes. As the 'Localism' agenda becomes more part of local authorities' thinking and decision making processes participative land use planning, drawing on an ecosystems services approach, may have more policy resonance.

d. **National level voluntary / third sector organisations** such as the National Trust and the RSBP could be key organisations in taking up and using the findings of these pilot processes at a policy and practice level.

e. It needs to be communicated to policy makers that the public can engage meaningfully with **complex** ecological and land panning issues if the methodology is correct and the data / science is presented clearly.

Influence to date

Feedback indicates that at this at this stage in the process much of the learning is about process rather than policy outcomes.

There is some indication from interviewee feedback that the pilot initiatives are likely to have some immediate influence on:

- The National Environment Framework – Wales.
- Glastir – the proposed new all Wales Agri-Environment Scheme being introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- Highland Council's Adaptation Strategy.

There is an aspiration to influence in the medium term:

- CAP reform.
- Rural Development Support – Wales.
- Micro hydro MCS accreditation for Feed In Tariff.
- Large scale wind and water management
- Department for Communities and Local Government - but would need more socio/economic valuations to be incorporated.
- European policy - as most environmental legislation comes from the EU.
- The Localism agenda, however feedback suggests that more work is necessary to consider linkages and specific areas for influence.

Feedback from the Natural Capital Initiative suggests that policy influence may be more effective in Scotland and Wales due to the smaller size of government in the devolved administrations and the easier access to senior civil servants and ministers. Indeed, the Cambrian Mountains process has already met with the Welsh Minister for Rural Affairs to feed back the initial finding of the process and to secure commitments to take certain initiatives forward at a senior policy level nationally.

f. Despite the small scale and even at this early stage there is confidence within commissioning agencies and some participants that policy influence is being achieved. There is also some initial evidence to suggest that the process and findings of the pilot initiatives are being acknowledged and have the potential to be influential at a range of policy levels.

Maximising the impact

There was particular concern expressed in the Welsh pilot that senior policy makers from the Assembly were not present at the more strategic of the workshops. Engaging policy makers face to face and targeting the recommendations to the right people at the right level was felt to be crucial if the time and effort invested was to be effective beyond the meeting process.

"The Assembly needed to experience the discussions that were had not just hear about the conclusions reached. Without them being present it's very difficult to convey that afterwards in a half hour meeting. As useful as the events were it was most useful to the Cambrian Mountain Initiative. All very well talking to ourselves and the CCW but it needed to be heard at a more senior level in government. If senior figures from relevant government departments are not participating there's a question as to the worth of these discussions". (participant, Cambrian Mountains process)

"There are so many departments that these discussions impact upon – it should go out to everyone who's policy decisions will affect the themes we have been dealing with. We need however a collective response" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

The Welsh ministerial meeting illustrates the importance of full and accurate reporting. There is some concern that the reporting from the meetings did not capture the necessary detail so the reporting to policy makers may be compromised or misunderstood.

"I'm worried that if the findings are over simplified it may do more harm than good. For example, Polymapping could be an excellent discussion tool, haven't seen anything better and it should be used again and in a wider context. If what comes out of the events is 'we like the polymap' there's a danger that it will be used to create decisions rather than create discussions that will lead to decisions" (participant, Cambrian Mountains process).

There were a number of comments from across the pilots that it was difficult to capture all that was discussed and the lack of dedicated recorders or table facilitators in most sessions didn't help.

Feedback across the pilots suggests that there will be less incentive to participate if there are no clear policy outcomes / benefits identified at the inception of the engagement process. For community members in particular the anticipated outcomes are a key motivator to participation.

Concern was raised at the timing of the two pieces of work that were commissioned by Sciencewise-ERC to help embed policy at a senior level. Due to programming constraints, the need to report by the end of March 2011 and the slippage of project timescales the evaluation was not able to input into the embedding work of the Natural Capital Initiative.

"By the time Icarus' work is complete NCI's embedding work contract will be complete, it's a missed opportunity" (NCI).

Learning points

g. Involving relevant **senior policy makers** in the deliberative process makes policy influence more likely.

h. **Full and accurate reporting** of the pilot processes findings will be critical to ensure policy influence and embedding. Given the complexity of the issues being discussed, poor recording and time constraints could mean that the full extent of deliberations is not captured or the incorrect emphasis applied to recommendations and feedback. The reports need to be received by the correct people /departments in government; written responses received and follow up meetings arranged.

i There was limited linking/**alignment of the processes with specific policy areas** / initiatives from the outset or the incorporation in the exercises of likely policy scenarios. This potentially limited the effectiveness of policy influence of the processes' findings.

j. It has been unclear how the **policy embedding work** of NCI has fitted with the programme evaluation undertaken by Icarus. These two processes have been happening simultaneously which has meant that the policy embedding work has not been able to benefit from the findings of the evaluation.

5. Additional outcomes / added value

The engagement of a broad cross section of people in meaningful conversations about issues of land use planning and management in relation to ecosystem services not only achieved focussed conversations and policy recommendations but was in itself a positive experience for many of the people who took part and a number of additional benefits were highlighted.

A large majority of those interviewed across the three pilots, regardless of whether they thought the process would be impactful and facilitating change, said that they had enjoyed participating. Many people said it was 'interesting' and 'stimulating'. A lot of reference was made to the benefit of 'having time out to think'. People reflected that there was generally very little space to have serious and meaningful conversations about important and complex whole society issues in an environment that wasn't set up to be contentious.

Feedback from many suggests that people were challenged to think differently and although a number of respondents pointed out that new learning was limited the tool of seeing things through a different lens (landscape value and ecological services) was welcomed. Having a new vocabulary through which to express an opinion was also mentioned in a positive light.

Comments were made about the benefit of meeting different people and making new links to other initiatives happening in their town / local area. One group cited learning about the local Transition Town initiative which prompted a discussion about community led energy projects, and linking the methodology to parish planning processes.

Learning points

a. Participating in the process was a **positive** and interesting experience for the majority whether they thought there would be any practical outcome or not.

b. The act of establishing a space to take time out to have a **meaningful conversation** with others in a structured and non contentious environment was broadly supported.

c. The processes were successful in enabling people to **think differently** and view issues through a different lens.

d. There were benefits in **linking up local initiatives** to mutual benefit.

6. Next steps

A number of next steps relate to elements of process and policy outlined above.

Many participants across all the pilots fed back that the one thing they would like to see happen next is the follow through from the deliberation to change on the ground and the ground proofing of policy initiatives that had been worked through in discussions.

There was positive feedback especially from agency staff about the need to replicate, scale up and undertake similar deliberative processes on a longer time frame. This would enable continued learning, build more mature and robust relationships with communities and stakeholders and enable more science to be used more fully, in a more considered way to better effect.

The immediate next steps that were outlined in Wales and the East of England were to convene a findings feedback session with the groups who participated.

There was some desire to have more advocates or champions to take forward and promote the methodology of participative planning using the ecosystem services approach. It was mentioned that Defra are doing this nationally and Natural England and the Environment Agency have one or two leads nationally on this approach.

There are some initial moves to use the learning from the pilots to inform other deliberative / participative processes that will use an ecosystem approach to consider land use planning and management issues. In Scotland there is already an initiative underway focussing on the A9 corridor led by Perth and Kinross Council. Scottish Natural Heritage are providing support and advice, drawing on their experience with the Nairn and Machars pilots. In Wales, the Cambrian Mountain Initiative is continuing with the development of Polyscape as a deliberative tool and has engaged interest in this way of working at a ministerial level in the Welsh Assembly Government. Local participants in the East of England agricultural policy pilot may make linkages into other local initiatives such as parish planning.

There were a number of suggestions from respondents about the potential to streamline the process and perhaps have self completion tool kits and on line elements.

Learning points

a. There is a strong desire across all pilots to move the work undertaken into an **implementation** phase to be able to demonstrate the relationships between the process into change on the ground.

b. There is broad support for further **development** of the pilots, replication and scaling up of the approach, taking into account the learning from this initiative.

c. There was a general agreement that these pilots have the potential to be **replicated** in other areas and on other issues given a consideration of the learning that is emerging from these pilot processes.

d. There was some discussion across the pilots as to how the process could be **streamlined**, delivered without independent facilitation and even developed into a self delivery tool kit with some on-line elements. Given the challenges of time, methodology, recording and the positive feedback about deliberation with a broad base of stakeholders and independent facilitation, a streamlined, resource light version of the process could be difficult to achieve to the required quality. Any move in this direction should be approached with caution and would require considerable rethinking of methodology and approaches.

e. Longer tem processes which enable solid and productive **relationships** to be built with communities and stakeholders are desired as well as developing a functional relationship between the grass roots and senior policy makers.

f. There is a need to ensure that future processes are linked into and effectively use **national / international level research** and current thinking on ecosystem services science.

g. **Champions or advocates** at a senior level are needed to ensure this approach is considered and commissioned when considering land / landscape management, planning, climate change adaptation and mitigation etc.

7. Conclusions

Given the timing of the evaluative process (i.e. running alongside the delivery of the pilots) the majority of the more robust learning is about the process of designing and delivering the initiatives. There is less clarity about policy influence and what may be productive next steps, although some influence is being brought to bear and there is learning about how the approaches could be further applied and developed.

Overall those engaged fed back that participating in the deliberative processes was positive and interesting, enabling meaningful conversations in issues that were important for local communities. For many this was the first opportunity to consider these issues properly with others and the ecosystem services approach provided a useful lens through which to view issues such as the impact of climate change and landscape / land use planning.

A fundamental process point however is that public dialogue projects must communicate the purpose of the exercise to those the initiatives seeks to engage. This was not done well across all projects, the process being clear but the intended outcome not. Equally reporting must go back to participants to validate their participation and demonstrate the likely benefit of the dialogue process. Again this was variable.

Pressure of time worked against all of the pilots and restricted the establishment of meaningful linkages pre and post dialogue process with community structures and current policy development. The Welsh pilot was particularly strong in terms of working with ongoing community structures (the Menter groups) and achieved some initial but positive policy links through meetings with the Department for Rural Affairs in the Welsh Assembly Government. The Machars pilot in Scotland also benefitted from working with a pre existing community organisation (Machars Action) who may be able to perpetuate some of the work undertaken. A range of policy instruments were cited as having been influenced or likely to be influenced with particular potential emerging from the Welsh and Scottish pilots. This may reflect the better / easier links the commissioning and delivery teams had with the devolved administrations.

Although feedback was good about the running of the meetings more clarity in terms of framing discussion questions was needed and discussion facilitators at tables would have enabled better focus and recording of key points. Methods that enable a visualisation of planning options, ecosystem types and related goods and services were particularly useful.

The understanding of ecosystem services as a concept was good and helped those engaged to move quickly into meaningful conversations about landscape and land use planning. Indeed, the entry point of ecosystem services enabled groups to discuss what could potentially be contentious subjects such as wind energy projects and coastline management more openly and with less immediate polarisation of views.

The input of science was cautious across all pilots with the majority feedback from participants indicating that more detailed, in depth but well explained science would have assisted the depth and breadth of deliberations. Timescales again worked against this, however drawing more on, and interpreting clearly, existing regional and national research would help. Other structures and methods that allow a more in depth deliberation may also need to be considered.

The pilots were considered good value for money and time was well used however Sciencewise-ERC could have considered teaming up with organisations such as Living With Environmental Change and the National Ecosystem Assessment to enable more resources to be deployed, a broader data source established and additional routes into policy. This may be an arrangement that could be developed as the learning from the pilots moves the debate and methodologies forward.

Next steps could include a scaling up and replication of the approach. There is already another similar piece of work being delivered in Scotland and the Cambrian Mountain Initiative in Wales will use the learning as it further develops its Polyscape modelling. Caution needs to be exercised in streamlining and simplifying the methodologies, as suggested by some respondents, as given the need for an understanding of both complex and uncertain futures a simplified version may struggle to achieve the required insight, quality of debate and longer term links to community structures and policy.

Appendix 1. Evaluation framework – ecosystem services dialogue

Stakeholders to the evaluation:

- Policy clients (PC) – SNH, CCW, Govt Office EoE, Sustainability East etc.
- Local policy makers – (LPM) LAs for each pilot, Key NGOs e.g. Wildlife Trusts – others who manage landscapes.
- Sample of Participants form each initiative (P)
- Sciencewise-ERC / Natural Capital initiative (SW/NCI)
- Deliverers - Facilitators and contractors (including community contacts where used to identify participants) (D)
- National policy clients - Govt agencies / departments – sample from - DEFRA, Environment Agency, cabinet office etc. (NPC)

A. Outcomes for policy

Are the processes likely to lead to better policy outcomes, particularly in relation to 'combined' valuations / decision making (where tacit and expert opinions are combined)?

Broad question		Specific questions		Directed at
1.	**To what extent have the findings of the ecosystem services dialogue processes influenced policy and decision making?**	1a)	Are the findings of the dialogues being accepted as a valid consideration in influencing policy / decision making?	PC, LPM, SW/NCI, NPC
		1b)	What planning processes /decisions have been influenced or are likely to be influenced by the findings of the dialogue processes?	PC, LPM, SW/NCI, NPC
		1c)	Is the process likely to improve policy formation and decision making?	PC, LPM, SW/NCI, NPC

Notes for possible question guides/ prompts:

- How will you use the data / results?
- What did you find most interesting?
- Have the findings changed the way you've thought about issues?
- Have the findings changed anything?

- Have you given more or less priority to anything due to the findings?
- Any new points of view or emphasis?

B. Additional outcomes / added value

Has the process led to new any additional outcomes e.g. relations, connections or local solutions?

2.	**Has the process made an impact or change on the participants and/or their local area?**	2a)	Has the ecosystems services approach enabled the people participating to have better conversations about the issues?	PC, LPM, P, D
		2b)	Have participants been encouraged to think more broadly about the issues and consider more integrated solutions?	PC, LPM, P, D
		2c)	How satisfied are you about how the results are being used or will be used?	PC, LPM, P, D
		2d)	What has been the legacy of the dialogue sessions with the public locally, for example subsequent personal or group actions / behaviour changes linked to or motivated by their participation in the process and/or use of the findings?	PC, LPM, P, D

Notes for possible question guides/ prompts:

- Have you talked to anyone since about the meetings (either those who participated or others)?
- What needs to happen next?

C. Process lessons

C1. Using expert and local knowledge to find a productive common language

3.	**What learning has there been that will support the development of an effective and credible**	3a)	What learning has taken place from the 3 projects about the relative strengths and weaknesses of	PC, LPM, P, D, SW/NCI

	methodology for engaging with the public in dialogue about ecosystem services?		an Ecosystem Services Approach as opposed to other participatory ecosystems approaches e.g. CBD Ecosystem Approach?	
		3b)	Is the model transferable to work with the public in other areas with different landscape and ecosystem issues and priorities?	PC, LPM, D, SW/NCI, NPC
Notes for possible question guides/ prompts: • Is there anything you would do differently?				
4.	**To what extent have the public been able to engage with the issues and effectively use the science / data necessary to meaningfully deliberate and articulate their concerns, ideas and proposals?**	4a)	Have the processes developed effective mechanisms and a common language (i.e. between the public and land management professionals/ scientists) to enable the public to understand and use the concepts of ecosystem services in deliberations about the value of landscape types and future management / policy decisions?	PC, LPM, P, D
		4b)	Has data / science been pitched at the correct level to achieve a balance between content, understandability and usefulness in terms of addressing the issues adequately and making robust and useful findings/recommendations?	PC, LPM, P, D
		4c)	To what extent and to what effect have the findings from the dialogue processes managed to integrate the available scientific data with the public's opinions, knowledge and recommendations?	PC, LPM, P, D
		4d)	What evidence is there that the scope of the science / data under consideration has been sufficiently broad to have confidence that the	PC, LPM, D

			findings will be able to effectively influence policy and decision making?	
C2. The methodology, scaling up and individual methods used				
5.	**How effective were the methods used in the dialogue sessions?**	5a)	To what extent did the format, exercises and approaches used for the dialogue sessions help to achieve the project's objectives?	PC, LPM, P, D
		5b)	What did participants learn through being involved in the process?	PC, LPM, P, D
		5c)	What were the weaknesses of the different approaches / methods used?	PC, LPM, P, D
		5d)	What were the strengths of the different approaches/methods used?	PC, LPM, P, D
6.	**Has a model been created that is replicable for other similar initiatives in other areas?**	6 a)	Would you do anything differently?	PC, LPM, P, D, SW/NCI
		6 b)	Are there any areas that would need to be designed specifically to fit the local circumstances?	PC, LPM, P, D, SW/NCI
7.	**Was the process well received by participants?**	7a)	Did participants feel the process was worthwhile and that it was useful to be involved?	P, D
		7b)	Did participants feel that they were able to raise their concerns, issues and proposals that their local knowledge and experience was valued, listened to and influenced the sessions' findings?	P, D
		7c)	Was the whole process well managed?	P, D
Notes for possible question guides/ prompts: • Did the group dynamic help or hinder? • What did the group add in terms of expertise?				

D. Input lessons – effectively resourcing ecosystem valuation exercises				
What is needed to ensure that ecosystem valuation exercises are effective and efficient as they are scaled up and rolled out?				
8.	**Have the inputs to the ESA dialogue been adequate to ensure the delivery of an effective and efficient project?**	8a)	Have the human resources devoted to the management and delivery of the project been sufficient (people, time available)?	PC, LPM, SW/NCI, P, D
		8b)	Have the financial resources devoted to the management and delivery of project been sufficient?	PC, LPM, SW/NCI, P, D
		8c)	What changes to the human or financial investment into the project should or could have been made and why?	PC, LPM, SW/NCI, P, D
9.	**Have the correct people been involved?**	9a)	Were the characteristics / interests of the public involved appropriately representative of a range of different perspectives and positions in that area?	PC, LPM, SW/NCI, P, D
		9b)	Was anybody or any position / interest missing?	PC, LPM, SW/NCI, P, D
10.	**Is it clear to all what the project aims to achieve?**	10a)	To what extent did participants understand what the project aimed to achieve, the process that would be followed, and the scope of the work?	PC, LPM, P, D
11.	**Do the resources invested in the project represent good value in terms of the benefits achieved?**	11a)	What has been the cost of the project?	PC, SW/NCI,
		11b)	Does this represent value for money?	PC, SW/NCI,
12.	**Is the input of expert knowledge and data appropriate to the needs of the project?**	12a)	Are the experts / policy makers inputting into the process competent and knowledgeable?	PC, LPM, P, D
		12b)	Is the information, data and opinion input into the	PC, LPM, P,

			process pitched at the correct level to enable quality deliberation to take place?	D
		12c)	Is all the necessary information, data and opinion available?	PC, LPM, P, D
		12d)	Is the knowledge, information, data and opinion input into the process seen as fair and unbiased?	PC, LPM, P, D
		12e)	Have participants in the process had or secured adequate knowledge and skills to participate effectively in the process?	PC, LPM, P, D
E. Context and background				
What needs to be taken into account re. context and background nationally and locally?				
13.	**What influence, if any, have internal or external contextual factors had on the management and delivery of the project?**	13a)	Have there been any significant internal contextual factors that have influenced the management and delivery of the project?	PC, LPM, D, SW/NCI
		13b)	Have there been any significant external contextual factors that have influenced the management and delivery of the project?	PC, LPM, P, D, SW/NCI
		13c)	In what ways has the programme been affected and what difference has this made to the impact on the process, outputs and outcomes of the project?	PC, LPM, P, D, SW/NCI
		13d)	Has the project been sufficiently flexible to adapt to any internal or external contextual factors which have affected its delivery?	PC, LPM, D, SW/NCI
14.	**To what extent have the individual projects responded to and reflected local circumstances?**	14a)	Has the process been sufficiently flexible to adequately reflect the local operating context and circumstances of each project?	PC, LPM, P, D, SW/NCI
E. Reflection on the evaluation				
15.	**Was learning achieved within and across the three elements?**	15a)	How well did the mechanisms to facilitate shared learning work?	PC, LPM, D, SW/NCI

		15b)	How much shared learning took place between projects and what was the value of this?	PC, LPM, D, SW/NCI
		15c)	What improvements could be made to the opportunities for shared learning?	PC, LPM, D, SW/NCI
		15d)	Did the evaluation process itself influence the outcomes of the initiative?	PC, LPM, D, SW/NCI

Appendix 2. About Icarus

Icarus specialises in the design, facilitation, delivery and evaluation of planning and decision making processes which draw people and organisations together – often called stakeholder engagement. Much of the work we undertake involves the design of processes where multiple stakeholders, multiple issues and multiple positions are involved. Our approach is underpinned by a commitment to a shared journey, working collaboratively to build skills, understanding and capacity with our clients and with the organisations and individuals we are seeking to engage.

Icarus provides professional support, policy advice and direct delivery in a wide range of inter related fields. We have particular expertise in environmental issues, health and social care, child and family services and voluntary sector development.

Our work is across the public / not for profit sector and our main client base is with governmental organisations, local authorities, the voluntary sector, partnership bodies, communities and community organisations. We only work with organisations committed to 'Positive Social Change'.

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